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**The Dissertation Committee for Laine Elise Perez Certifies that this is the approved
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**Preparation, Protection, and Practicality: Anxieties in
Progressive Era Education**

Committee:

Phillip Barrish, Co-Supervisor

Gretchen Murphy, Co-Supervisor

Wayne Lesser

John Gonzales

Beverly Lyon Clark

**Preparation, Protection, and Practicality: Anxieties in Progressive Era
Education**

by

Laine Elise Perez, B.A., M.A.

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Preparation, Protection, and Practicality: Anxieties in Progressive Era Education

Laine Elise Perez, Ph.D.

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Supervisors: Phillip Barrish and Gretchen Murphy

This project explores the anxieties and contradictions that appeared in discussions of education during the Progressive Era by examining education theory, as found in the journals *Education* and *The Playground*, and comparing this theory to children's books of the era. I argue that turn of the century educators and authors promoted practical education so that they could use the school, the home, and the playground to accomplish two goals simultaneously: protecting children from economic concerns in the present and preparing children for the future by helping them develop the skills they would need to be productive citizens. However, in attempting to accomplish both of these goals, these individuals turned the home, school, and playground into contradictory spaces. This project first explores how these educators and authors resolved the tensions and contradictions present in these spaces—and the problems of class and gender underlying their resolutions—before examining why they were invested in creating a protected space for childhood in the first place and finally showing how the protected space they attempted to create became destabilized. Ultimately, I claim that these educators and

authors made the protected space of childhood contingent upon the child's ability to submit to and absorb practical lessons learned on the playground and in the classroom and the home. Consequently, it appears that these individuals believed that children must earn their right to a protected childhood, but by insisting that children earn their protection, these individuals allowed economic concerns to creep into the supposedly separate childhood space. Each chapter of this dissertation will explore a particular facet of Progressive Era education—specifically, humanities courses, vocational education, and the play and playground movement—to reveal the anxieties that surrounded the intersections among the establishment of practical education, the desire to protect children from the workforce, and the need to prepare children for their futures as productive citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In 1908, Charles Hughes, the governor of New York, gave an address at the Second Annual Playground Conference in which he claimed that “we want play—simply play—for the children of our great cities” (7). Hughes believed that without play the future lives of city children would be marked by “the struggle for bare existence,” and these children would grow up to be discontented adults of poor physical, mental, and moral condition (7). Accordingly, he argued that children needed to be provided the opportunity for “a few hours in the fresh air, few hours of self-abandon in innocent fun, [and] a chance to be a normal boy or girl” on the playground (9). Hughes promoted play partially because he was part of a broader movement that wished to provide all children of all classes a chance for a childhood defined by play rather than by work. However, he also promoted a play because it could help create “good men and women in the world” who would live “decent, virtuous wholesome [lives]” (9). Hughes’s comments at this conference raise a number of questions regarding the purpose of education and the place of children at the turn-of-the-century. What was the function of children’s education? Was it to teach the child practical skills needed in the workplace or to keep the child out of the workplace? What was the purpose of childhood? Was it to be a time for fun and play, a protected time completely separate from economic concerns or was it to be a time of preparation and development for the future? It is these questions that inform and govern the central argument of this project that explores the intersections between a

practical education, the desire to provide children with a protected childhood, and the need to prepare children for the future.

BACKGROUND AND CENTRAL ARGUMENT

Scholars of children's literature and culture have noted that at the turn-of-the-century the view of the child was shifting. According to Viviana Zelizer, this shift was due to a change in the conception of the child's inherent value; children were no longer seen in terms of the work they could do or the money they could bring into the home. Instead, they were seen as emotionally valuable, as sacred beings who should occupy a "separate noncommercial place" in society (11). The underlying causes for this change in the view of the child are myriad and complex. Steven Mintz notes that this change was, in part, due to the growing prevalence of the Romantic conception of childhood which "viewed children as symbols of purity, spontaneity, and emotional expressiveness" and, therefore, "encouraged the notion that children needed to be sheltered from adult realities, such as death, profanity, and sexuality, in order to preserve their childish innocence" (76-77). As adults began to perceive children as dependent beings in need of protection, they created a number of laws and institutions—like school attendance laws and child labor restrictions—to keep children safe (77). In addition, Mintz states that the shift in the view of the child was also affected by "a sharp reduction in the birthrate" which provided "the essential foundation for a new kind of upbringing" in which children were seen "not as sources of labor but as 'social capital'" (77). Zelizer notes that the emotional value of the child also could have grown in conjunction with the "increasing differentiation

between economic production and the home,” stating that the “sentimentalization of childhood was intimately tied to the changing world of their mothers” (9). According to Carl Degler, (as quoted in *Pricing the Priceless Child*) “exalting the child went hand in hand with exalting the domestic role of women; each reinforced the other while together they raised domesticity within the family to a new and higher level of respectability” (9).

This change in the view of the child had innumerable effects. First, it contributed to the creation, normalization, and validation of the middle-class conception that childhood should be “free from labor and devoted to schooling” (Mintz 76). Middle-class reformers began to claim that this was the form of childhood that should be offered to and enjoyed by all children of all classes. In fact, they argued that parents who were not able to provide this protected childhood were “mercenary or insensitive” because, according to Zelizer, “properly loved children, regardless of social class, belonged in a domesticated, nonproductive world of lessons, games, and token money” (11). Second, this change sparked the need to create a space outside of the marketplace for these children who were no longer economically productive. This effect connects back to Zelizer’s claim that the “‘cult of true womanhood’ and ‘true’ childhood grew in tandem” (9). By ensuring that children occupied a space outside the marketplace, adults could be satisfied that there could be some existence outside capitalism and economic valuation. As innumerable critics have noted in their discussions of sentimental literature, the presence of these spaces outside the marketplace—like this imagined space of childhood—allowed for the rationalization, acceptance, and continuation of the current

economic order.¹ Third, this change amplified the investment and interest of middle-class reformers and newly minted child-experts in the living and working conditions of all children, most importantly, the children living in urban slums. These reformers and experts claimed that “as innocent victims and as the hope for America's future, children had to be protected. They represented all that was good about the country and the way they were treated reflected the nation's values and priorities” (Marten 3). However, according to Steven Mintz, these child experts and reformers were often “guilty of paternalism, class, and racial bias, xenophobia, and double standards regarding gender” (155). Thus, while these reformers did have a “sustained public commitment to children’s welfare” and did want to ensure that all children everywhere had the same opportunities, they were also highly invested in promoting white, middle-class values, beliefs, and standards of living (155). So, the interest of Progressive Era reformers in children was, in part, a means of ensuring the supremacy of a particular set of classed and raced ideals.

Among the many interests of child welfare workers was education since they believed the schools were capable of solving any number of contemporary issues. One of the central problems they used the school to solve was the issue of child labor. According to Lawrence Cremin, educators and reformers enacted attendance laws to ensure that children would go to school rather than going to work—despite their own, or

¹ For more on the role that the domestic or non-economic space had in upholding capitalism, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989).

their parents', preferences.² For example, in his 1891 article "The Purposes and Needs of State Education" published in the journal *Education*, W.M. Beardshear argues that it was, in fact, only parents and employers who were preventing children from receiving a proper education and further argued that it was the responsibility of the state to see to children's education, especially if parents weren't invested:

The child owes it to the state to be educated and the state owes it to the child to see that he is educated. If his parents do not appreciate these vital interests of this country, they should feel the force of a wholesome law to compel them to send him to school. (298)³

Educators believed the schools could be a means of protecting the child from the world of adult concerns—and occasionally from adults themselves—by keeping him out of the workplace. However, in order to ensure that students and parents obeyed these attendance laws and kept their children out of the workplace, educators needed to make sure that the education offered was made "useful, appealing, and realistic" (Cremin 305).⁴

² There were a number of problems with attendance laws as noted by William Bullough in *Cities and Schools in the Gilded Age*. There were a number of inconsistencies in the legislation, those enacting the laws didn't understand that the even a child's small earnings were sometimes crucial to the survival of a family, and, most importantly, most children preferred work to school. For more see "Chapter One: The Challenge of Numbers."

³ This need for state intervention in the life of the child was part of a broader movement that believed parents—especially mothers—to be incapable of properly raising their children. The school, therefore, had to step in and teach children proper values. For more on this particular aspect of the child saving movement, see Lawrence Cremin "Child Saving and Social Service Agencies," chapter 6 from *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), Steven Mintz, "Save the Child," chapter 8 from *Huck's Raft* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004), and James Marten, "Introduction" to *Childhood and Child Welfare in the Progressive Era: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005).

⁴ This change in curriculum was also crucial because child labor laws were inconsistently created and enforced during this period. In fact, effective child labor laws were only put into place after the Depression.

In other words, they needed to show that attending school, especially high school, was a worthwhile investment. This goal necessitated a change in the school curriculum.

There was considerable debate over what kind of change was needed in order to ensure the practicality of the school curriculum. Some educators worked to create a curriculum that was more firmly based in teaching the kinds of skills students would need to succeed in future occupations, arguing that this form of education was most in step with the demands of modern society. The statement of purpose for Calvin Woodward's manual training high school even included the claim that school's founding was due to the "demand for young men a system of education which shall fit them for the actual duties of life in a more direct and positive manner than is done in the ordinary American school" (Bennett 348). Other educators argued that developing the child's reasoning powers would do more for him in the long run than teaching him how to run machinery. Those promoting the humanities, for example, argued that an education that focused on learning broader, less specific skills would best prepare the child for his or her future. Finally, there were those who believed that even that most sacred of childhood institutions, play, could be used to help children develop into productive citizens. In his book *Play in Education*, Joseph Lee, one of the central figures of the play and playground movement, claimed that "the boy without a playground is the man without a job" because "play is to the boy what work is to the man—the fullest expression of what he is and the effective means of becoming more" (viii).

Uniting all of these curricula was the belief that making education practical involved establishing a connection between the lessons learned in school and the skills children would need to succeed as adults. The ensuing discussion regarding what type of education best prepared children for their future as productive citizens differed depending on class and gender. For boys, a practical education involved learning the skills needed to succeed in business or industry, but determining which skills were necessary for each boy to learn involved divisions along class lines, despite the fact that the advocates of humanities education and those supporting vocational classes both preached equality and democracy in education.⁵ The boys who were middle-class would get a humanities education and would obtain white-collar jobs, and the boys who were lower-class would get a vocational education and enter into jobs in the industrial sector. Thus, both humanities and vocational courses actually worked to ensure social stability rather than challenging class stratification though they accomplished this goal in different manners. Those supporting the humanities claimed that their courses could help individuals be more fulfilled personally if not professionally, and those supporting vocational education claimed that their courses would create a better understanding between employer and employee, thereby creating better working conditions for lower-class boys.⁶ Those educators invested in girls' education believed that all girls, regardless of class, would need to obtain a domestic education so that they could manage their own homes in the

⁵ For examples, see Mabel L. Warner, "A Plea for More English Composition in Secondary Schools," *Education* (21): 163-170 and Don Mowry, "Industrial Education," *Education* (32): 20-25.

⁶ For examples, see Henry Lincoln Clapp, "Aesthetic Side of Education," *Education* (15): 449-456 and Florence Elberta Barnes, "Social Aspects of Industrial Education," *Education* (36): 182-191.

future and, ultimately, become productive and useful women. Girls' domestic courses were often blended with history, math, composition, and science classes in order to make girls more effective in the domestic space. But these educators assumed that all girls would have the resources, the time, and the option of using this blended education to create a new type of domestic space that embraced both practical work and creative solutions to domestic problems, thereby excluding many lower-class girls from the benefits of this type of education. Therefore, girls' education was marked by a clear class division as well; however, unlike in boys' education, this class division did not always extend to the actual curriculum. Those promoting play as an educational tool believed that all children deserved to have places and time to play, so that they would be able to develop mentally, morally, and physically and, ultimately, become useful citizens. However, these educators were especially invested in ensuring that lower-class boys and girls absorbed the right lessons and values on the playground so that they could turn these individuals into productive and content laborers for industrial and manufacturing jobs in the future. But though the educators discussed in this project were more interested in maintaining social stability than challenging class stratification, they were still invested in providing all children, regardless of class, with a protected childhood away from the corrupting influence of the marketplace. In order to provide this childhood, they had to construct a link between a practical education that would develop children into productive citizens and the protection the schools offered to children, but establishing this connection generated a substantial amount of anxiety.

This project examines the anxieties that surrounded the intersections among the establishment of practical education, the desire to protect children from the workforce, and the need to prepare children for their futures in the workforce. I argue that turn of the century educators wanted the schools and playgrounds to accomplish two disparate goals simultaneously: to protect the child from economic concerns in the present and to prepare the child for his future vocation. The establishment of a practical education helped accomplish both of these goals. However, these educators had concerns about using a practical education to protect children from the marketplace and develop them into productive citizens. This anxiety grew out of the desire these educators had to create a space for childhood entirely separate from economic considerations and the fear that using the school explicitly to prepare children for an economic future would corrupt this space. I argue that it was this fear of losing this protected childhood space that drove these educators' attempts to resolve the tension between protection and preparation that the schools, playgrounds, and homes provided.

However, the resolutions these educators provided were often tenuous at best and, at worst, ended up contaminating the protected space of childhood they worked so hard to maintain. Because these educators argued that protection and preparation could work in tandem and that children could be protected from the workforce by submitting to practical lessons learned on the playground and in the classroom, it appeared that they were arguing that children must earn their right to a protected childhood. In other words, the establishment of the protected childhood space within the school was based on

children's ability to learn and apply the lessons that could prepare them for the future rather than on their inherent priceless value as children. Thus, the way in which the protected childhood was constructed by educators allowed economic considerations to enter into this supposedly non-commercialized space. In the end, this project reveals that the protected space of childhood as it was imagined and constructed by these educators was contradictory and unstable.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter One—The Practical Humanities: Alger's Books and the Argument for Humanities Education examines how those supporting the humanities worked to convince students, parents, and other educators of the relevance of their courses. I claim that to promote the significance of the humanities, these educators argued that courses in English, history, and languages were practical because they helped generate skills that could be used in a variety of jobs and, more importantly, helped create useful and productive citizens. This chapter connects this discussion of the practical humanities to Horatio Alger's books in order to show how Horatio Alger's books corroborate the arguments made by those promoting the humanities. His books illustrate, in very concrete ways, how courses in the humanities provide skills one can use to obtain a well-paying, white-collar job and how these courses help one learn the moral, social, and behavioral proficiencies needed to be a functioning member of society. Finally, this chapter shows that educators supporting the humanities and Alger both used humanities courses as a means of justifying and maintaining class stratification. I begin with this

chapter to illustrate the terms that educators used to argue for curricular relevance and to show how these terms allowed for the school to be viewed as an entity that could both protect and prepare the child.

Chapter Two—How Should the Children Play: The Playground Movement and Louisa May Alcott explores how the middle-class reformers working in the play and playground movements argued for the practicality of play. Like the educators promoting the humanities, those promoting play, namely the Playground Association of America (PAA), claimed that all children of all classes should be provided time and space to play because of all the practical ends it could serve, especially its ability to develop children physically, mentally, morally, and socially. However, in making this argument, they seemed to be co-opting children's free, imaginative play and using it to prepare children for the future. In order to alleviate their anxiety over this use of play, these educators argued that children would not have to be aware of the educational potential of their games. I connect this discussion of the play and playground movement to Louisa May Alcott's books, specifically *Little Men* and *Jack and Jill*, as they contain the same anxiety about using all play to serve educational ends and use the same argument about children's ignorance of play's broader purposes to alleviate this anxiety. This discussion also reveals that the anxieties about free play were related to issues of class. Both the members of the PAA and Alcott needed to ensure that lower-class children absorbed middle-class values and became good citizens rather than criminals and malcontents. But in making this argument, they seemed to be claiming that children,

especially lower-class children must earn the right to protection thereby allowing economic considerations to enter into the protected space of childhood. Ultimately, this chapter begins to show the tenuous nature of the protected childhood as these educators constructed it.

Chapter Three—A Protected Childhood?: Vocational Education and Girls’ Books explores how the protection/preparation binary outlined in the previous chapter informed discussions of vocational education for girls. In order to fight the claim that vocational education was overly simplistic and materialistic in its aims, those supporting girls’ vocational education had to argue that the skills vocational education provided actually had broader applications than only helping girls obtain jobs. To accomplish this goal, these educators claimed that vocational education could keep children in school and out of the workplace. Thus, vocational classes became, simultaneously, a means of protecting the girls and preparing them for the future. This same desire to both protect the child from the outside world and prepare the child for the future can be seen in the interactions between the title characters and their caretakers in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Pollyanna*—though their vocational education takes place not in the classroom but in the home. I argue that each of these girls earns her right to a protected childhood by submitting to the practical lessons her caretaker imparts just as lower-class children earned the right to protection by absorbing the proper values through their play. But having these girls earn their right to protection, again, allows economic considerations to creep into the space of childhood that is supposed to be

untouched by broader economic and societal concerns. This chapter ends by returning to the discussion of practical education in order to show that educators promoting girls' vocational education felt that the truly practical education for girls was one that combined the humanities with domestic training because it helped develop girls into productive citizens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project exists at the intersection of three critical threads: the study of children's culture, the study of children's literature, and the study of education at the turn of the century. Scholars of children's culture have explored the issues of preparation and protection in their discussions of child work and consumption during this era. Viviana Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child* (1994) contains a lengthy discussion of child labor and child work at the turn-of-the-century. She argues that once children's "involvement with work changed, so did their relationship to money" as children were no longer earning wages but were receiving allowances from their parents (100). Zelizer claims that "it was difficult, however, to develop proper guidelines for the allowance money of a nonworking child" (105). This difficulty arose from the need to make money "into an educational and moral instrument" while still maintaining the integrity of the protected childhood space (106). Child experts argued that if parents made children earn their allowances, they risked turning their homes into places of employment for their children. So, parents and child experts established a separation between wages and allowances by claiming that the former was received for work performed and the latter was received

because it was an inherent right of childhood. However, Zelizer states that “it was difficult to maintain this culturally invented boundary between wage and allowance” because it was never stable to begin with and was constantly breached by parents who used allowances to ensure that their children learned a respect for labor and learned proper behavior (108-9). Zelizer clearly outlines the contradictions that arose from the desire to protect children from the economic sector and the need to prepare them for the future by teaching them the value of labor (and of money) and the importance of good moral and social behavior.

Lisa Jacobson’s *Raising Consumers* (2005) “examines how children were imagined and socialized as consumers between 1890 and 1940” and further explores how the presence of child consumers caused Americans to reconsider “what constituted a protected childhood in an age of mass culture and mass consumption” (1-2). As children became increasingly implicated in mass culture, the “sentimental conceptions of childhood innocence” became more difficult to sustain because adults believed that the carefree childhood would be corrupted by consumer society making children into mercenary and selfish creatures (3). Accordingly, parents and teachers attempted to instill in children “economic responsibility and respect for money” in order to teach them proper discipline and prevent them from spending money unwisely. However, “many worried that early development of children’s money sense might in itself be corrupting” (57). Jacobson argues that this worry “underscored the difficulty parents and child experts faced in resolving one of the central dilemmas of twentieth-century childhood:

how to prepare children for their encounters with the outside world while still protecting their cherished innocence” (57).

Zelizer and Jacobson (as well as other critics)⁷ have explored how the tensions between the need to protect the innocence of childhood and the need to prepare children for the work they would be doing in the future clashed in the debates over child labor and child consumption. Naturally, these studies informed the central argument of this project, but rather than exploring the issues of preparation and protection as they appeared in overtly economic realms (work and consumer culture), this project explores how preparation and protection appeared in the realm of education, a space supposedly separate from—and often defined against—the world of work, capitalism, and market value. By showing how the anxieties regarding preparation and the protected childhood appeared in education, I reveal that concerns about the loss of childhood innocence were not confined to discussions explicitly concerned with the placement of the child in the economic marketplace but instead pervaded almost all aspects of the child’s life, including education and play.

Those critics studying late 19th and early 20th century children’s literature have primarily explored the intersections between children’s books and larger cultural and historical movements. Anne Scott MacLeod’s book of essays *American Childhoods* (1994) explores the interplay between attitudes toward and about children and the fiction

⁷ For more on child consumer culture see Gary Cross, *Kids’ Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997) and Daniel Thomas Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children’s Clothing Industry and the Rise of the Child Consumer* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004).

published for their use. For example, in “Caddie Woodlawn’s Sisters,” MacLeod reveals how views of American girlhood in the 19th century affected the ways in which female authors conceived and wrote about girlhood. She notes that for many women, girlhood was a time of freedom, but once girls hit puberty, their freedom of movement and of activity became restricted, as they moved out of childhood and into “useful womanhood.” MacLeod claims that girls’ books mark the pain, emotion, and latent resentment of this movement from freedom to conformity. She argues that in *Jack and Jill*, Alcott depicts this movement from childhood to adolescence, showing how Jill must change from being a wild, freedom loving girl to a patient, cheerful, industrious woman, one who is willing to accept the “restrictions and demands of womanly subordination in marriage” (19). However, the fact that Jill must be literally crippled in order to accept this role reveals Alcott’s underlying problems with the conventional role girls must take upon entering into proper society as adults. MacLeod’s other essays delve into the ways in which shifting views of boyhood, of democracy, and of children more broadly affected how 19th and early 20th century children’s authors pictured children in their texts.⁸

Other critics, like Monika Elbert and Gillian Brown, have explored how issues of class and consumption influenced children’s authors of the late 19th century. Elbert’s essay, “Charitable (Mis)givings and the Aesthetics of Poverty in Louisa May Alcott’s Christmas Stories,” examines how Alcott’s short stories use the idea of charity to instill

⁸ Gillian Avery’s *Behold the Child* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1994) also explores how changing ideologies affected children’s texts. Avery’s text provides a good overview of the major economic, religious, social, and educational ideologies of each generation and explains how they affected the books being published for children and read by children as well as the books being banned and prohibited for their use.

capitalist values in children and teach children that it is, in fact, unnecessary and almost undesirable to attempt to alter the status quo or attempt to fix class inequalities. As Elbert claims “for Alcott, rising above one’s station is nearly impossible if one belongs to the working class... the message to middle-class children in these stories is that they can afford to be charitable since the status quo will reign” (34). Brown’s discussion of play in children’s literature explores children’s relationships to play objects, the role of gendered play in children’s development and education, and how adults saw and configured play in their texts for and about children. In her discussion of gendered play, Brown claims that “the sexual division of play simultaneously promotes two distinct but closely related ideals of play: play as reenactment of the past and play as rehearsal for the future” (26). Accordingly, boys’ play was configured as a “primitive and pure activity” while girls play focused on “domestic objects” that would help them learn proper housekeeping (27). However, Brown argues that adult investment in the play of children went beyond imagining and creating gender divisions; in fact, according to Brown, “the presence of adults [in children’s play]... means childhood can never be the impermeable zone that adults so persistently desire it to be” (36). So, while adults may have wanted children to occupy a space separate from the adult world, the intervention of adults in children’s play meant that this space couldn’t really exist. Thus, Brown’s study of play returns to the issue of protection and preparation explored in Zelizer’s and Jacobson’s works.

MacLeod, Elbert, and Brown have all explored how children's literature reflected shifts and changes in the view of the child from the mid to the late 19th century and how this literature showed the contradictions and complications present in late 19th century conceptions of class, gender, and childhood. These and other studies of children's literature informed and supported the central argument of this project since I also explore how the changing view of the child affected the way authors and educators discussed education and how class and gender affected these discussions. This project attempts to add to these discussions of children's literature by reading children's literature in conjunction with educational ideology. Though other critics have explored the intersections between education and children's literature, examining in particular the didactic purpose children's literature often serves,⁹ they have not examined how the issues of protection and preparation appeared concurrently in both education journals and depictions of education in children's literature. By examining this particular aspect of children's literature, this project reveals that all aspects of the child's life at the turn-of-the-century—from the schools they attended and the playgrounds they played on to the books they read—reflected the contradictory desires to create a protected space for children separate from economic concerns and to prepare the child for the future.

Those studying education have looked primarily at broader cultural issues—immigration, urbanization, child labor and attendance laws—and how they affected

⁹ For more on the intersections between children's literature and education see Gary Scharnhorst, "The Moral Foundation of the Juvenile Fiction," chapter four from *Horatio Alger Jr.* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) and *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger* and Beverly Lyon Clark, "Domesticating the School Story, Regendering a Genre: Alcott's *Little Men*" (*New Literary History*, vol. 26, issue 2).

curricular and administrative changes in the school. Most of these critics have explored the ways in which educators attempted to create an educational system that was practical for all children of all classes and could meet the needs of a changing society. For example, Lawrence Cremin's seminal study *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980* (1988) identifies the major belief that governed education in the Progressive Era: education was necessary for both democracy and societal reform. As he notes, education provided a means of Americanizing immigrants, meeting the needs of the workforce, improving family and community life, and creating good, productive citizens. In *Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* (1986), Herbert Kliebard notes the debates that occurred in turn-of-the-century education regarding which type of education was in fact the most practical and useful for a changing society. He notes that this debate had especial relevance at this moment because of the rise in the number of students attending high schools, the growth of the American common school, the enforcement of child labor laws, and the belief that attending high school could be a worthwhile investment (8). Both Cremin and Kliebard, of course, note the gender and class issues underlying Progressive Era education. For example, Cremin states that new developments in the schools allowed for the separation of students along class, race, and gender lines, while Kliebard argues that changes in the curriculum led to tracking of students.¹⁰

¹⁰ Other studies have paid particular attention to divisions in education along gender and class lines. For examples, see Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir, *Schooling for All: Class, Race, and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), Ileen

These critics have explored how turn-of-the-century educators argued for the necessity of a practical education and how educators used the schools to protect children from the workforce, to create productive citizens, and to ensure class stability. However, they have not examined the anxieties that arose surrounding the establishment of this practical education designed to simultaneously create good citizens for the future and protect children in the present. This project hopes to add another piece to the complicated puzzle regarding the conception of education at the turn-of-the-century by exploring these anxieties. Further, by connecting this exploration of the anxieties surrounding protection and preparation in education to an analysis of how and why educators feared contaminating the separate space of childhood, I hope to show how the need to provide children with a protected childhood complicated the school's mission to create good citizens for the future.

METHODOLOGY

Each of these chapters focuses on a group of articles from either the journal *Education* or, in the case of chapter two, *The Playground*, and compares these articles to the images of formal and informal education or play found in children's books. My reading focuses on these journals in particular for four reasons. First, each journal began during the formative years of the discussions regarding education (specifically the debates over curriculum) and play respectively. *Education* began in 1880, only a decade

DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburg* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), and Jane Bernard Powers, *The "Girl" Question in Education: Vocational Education for Young Women in the Progressive Era* (London: The Falmer Press, 1992).

after the advent of the vocational education movement, and a decade before the Committee of Ten meeting that, in 1892, worked to establish a new, humanities based curriculum for the high schools that took into account the changes in modern society. Other journals invested in issues of education, for example *School Review* and *Industrial Education Magazine*, were not published until well into the vocational education movement. Thus, *Education* provides the broadest perspective on education over the longest period of time. *The Playground* was the central publication of the Playground Association of America, the major proponent of the play and playground movement in the early part of the 20th century. The PAA's establishment of this journal marked the official beginning of a codified play movement in the United States. Thus, due to their publication dates, these journals provide a solid foundation for beginning any discussion of education during this time period. Second, the journals also covered a broad range of subjects which revealed how the various threads that comprise the debate over education responded to each other. For example, *Education* contains articles that support industrial and vocational education, humanities education, a renewed interest in physical education, and even those that discuss which courses should be offered to boys and to girls respectively. *The Playground* published articles on play in schools, cities, and rural areas; discussed play for children, adults, and adolescents; and included a number of descriptions of potential and actual play activities. Because these journals contained representative samples from the various groups involved in the debates over education, I was able to put together a more complete picture of turn of the century education.

Third, both of these journals drew a number of influential contemporary educators and reformers to their pages. Almost all of the central figures of the education movement published in either *Education* or in *The Playground* including Calvin Woodward, the man who started the vocational education movement, Charles Eliot, the chairman of the Committee of Ten and the President of Harvard, who promoted the humanities, and Joseph Lee, the president of the PAA. So, we can infer that these journals were fairly well respected and might even have circulated among those closely involved in the dialogues regarding the school curriculum. In addition, because these central figures contributed to these journals, it can also be assumed that the journals are fairly representative of the various viewpoints about education circulating at the time. Fourth, reading a vast number of articles in two key journals—rather than reading different articles across several journals—allowed me to explore, in more detail, how beliefs regarding education changed over time. By gaining familiarity with these journals, their repeat contributors, and their biases, I was able to get a fairly clear picture as to how and when particular shifts in the conversation about education occurred. For example, the early issues of *Education* contained fewer articles about vocational and industrial education, but as this movement gained steam, the number of articles devoted to this subject increased. The same phenomenon occurred with discussions of play and physical education; *Education* contained few articles on these subjects until well into the second decade of the 20th century.¹¹

¹¹ *The Playground* was less effective in this particular endeavor but was necessary to this project as it was

Children's books are used in this project because, in general, these books were already believed to be teaching tools by their own authors and by contemporary critics. There is, in fact, a very long, documented history of children's books being used to teach proper moral and social behavior in children.¹² This project began with this assumption. However, I didn't want to explore what these books were teaching about moral behavior (especially since this topic has been very well studied); instead, I wanted to look at what these books were teaching children about education and its value to determine if the same discussions regarding the school and its ability to simultaneously protect and prepare the child were occurring in different mediums. In addition, I wanted to include children's books here to show how authors put a concrete picture on the abstract concepts of education by applying these concepts to the lives of their fictional children. However, I chose to explore the books of Horatio Alger, Kate Douglas Wiggin, and Louisa May Alcott because these authors either worked in education, wrote about education, or were otherwise involved or invested in education. Alger worked as a tutor and saw himself as an educator, believing his books provided a medium through which he could teach children.¹³ Kate Douglas Wiggin not only published articles and books about education¹⁴

the central publication for the play and playground movement. No other journal would have provided the same number of articles or level of detail about the play movement.

¹² Gillian Avery's *Behold the Child: American Children and Their Books 1621-1922* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994), Jennifer Monaghan's *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Boston: University of Massachusetts UP, 2005), and Anne Scott MacLeod's *American Childhoods* (Athens: University of Georgia UP, 1996) provide clear examples of the didactic uses of children's books.

¹³ For more, see Gary Scharnhorst, "Bound to Rise," chapter two from *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) and "The Moral Foundation of the Juvenile Fiction," chapter four from *Horatio Alger Jr.*

but worked as a teacher, heading the first free kindergarten in California and creating a teacher-training school.¹⁵ Though Louisa May Alcott was more involved in the causes of abolition and feminism, she too was invested in education, an investment that, to some degree was influenced by her father, Bronson Alcott. Thus, it seemed very natural to use these particular texts not as a representative sample of what all authors of all children's books at the turn of the century were thinking but rather as an example of how those authors who were highly invested in education imagined the anxieties of modern education playing out in the lives of children. The texts included in this project by authors who weren't overly invested in education¹⁶ are used to show that even these authors were, to some degree, influenced by or aware of the debates and discussions transpiring among educators.

Admittedly, it is difficult to make an argument about the pervasiveness or primacy of any of the ideas regarding protection, preparation, or practical education, especially when using such a small sample of journals and books. In addition, the journal *Education*, on the whole, was far more interested in educational theory than in practice, so by only looking at this journal I am losing the ability to discuss actual classroom practices, how courses were designed and managed, and whether or not these courses

¹⁴ One example of an article on play appears in the 1908 issue of *The Playground*. She also published several books on the subject of kindergartens including *Kindergarten Principles and Practice* (1896) and three scholarly works (published in 1895 and 1896) on Friedrich Froebel's educational philosophies.

¹⁵ The other two books used in Chapter Two are included due to their popularity and their common linkage to *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. All three books are similar in plot, subject matter, and the description of their characters.

¹⁶ Montgomery, especially, was said to dislike her teaching career.

actually did what they were designed to do. By not discussing journals that focused specifically on vocational or domestic education or journals that focused specifically on the humanities, I also am likely missing particular talking points expressed by the advocates of these various courses. Finally, I also am not discussing political viewpoints here as it is outside the realm of this particular project; however, discussions of socialism in education would likely have some bearing on the issues of class that appear in all three chapters.¹⁷ Again, by only using this small selection of children's books it is difficult to know the prevalence of these ideas outside the educational arena. In addition, a larger perspective is also lost by not including a larger number of texts or including texts by non-white writers. Still, using these books does provide at least some acknowledgement that the concerns about protection and preparation found in the educational sector had a wider effect.

RELEVANCE OF PROJECT

The issues considered in this project resonate with a number of modern discussions regarding humanities and vocational education and the purpose and place play or recreation should have in the lives of children. The humanities are under attack by state legislators and others who believe that these courses are no longer teaching relevant skills that students can use to obtain well-paying jobs. In response, those

¹⁷ For more on socialism in education, see Kenneth Teitelbaum, *Schooling for "Good Rebels": Socialist Education for Children in the United States, 1900-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993) and Julia Mickenberg, *Learning From the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (New York: Oxford UP, 2006).

teaching in the arts and humanities argue that their courses can provide a number of skills, including those that cannot be obtained in STEM courses; consequently, those teaching in STEM fields argue that their courses do, in fact, create a well-rounded student—and, more importantly, creates a student with job prospects upon graduation. Anxieties over childhood obesity have incited a number of programs—NFL Play 60 and “Let’s Move,” for example—to get children to engage in play and other outdoors activities in order to ensure that children develop properly. Meanwhile, as government and corporate intervention have amped up, there has been considerable debate over helicopter parenting and the question of when too much control over the child’s supposedly unsupervised play time becomes problematic. The existence of these modern debates over education and play show that the issues that appear in late 19th and early 20th century education journals and children’s books still have at least some relevance today. Thus, looking at the history of these discussions can perhaps provide a starting place for understanding the tensions and conflicts that inform our current views of education in its myriad forms.

CHAPTER ONE—The Practical Humanities: Alger’s Books and the Argument for Humanities Education

INTRODUCTION

The current economic climate has been less than kind to the humanities. Entire departments that were once a central part of the four-year college curriculum have been labeled as luxury items by those looking to cut college costs. The reason behind this shift, as Kira Hamman notes in an article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, is “economic pragmatism” (par. 1). She states that those looking to curtail or cut the arts and humanities believe that “liberal arts... are a luxury we can no longer afford because students who study the liberal arts do not develop the skills they need to succeed in the workplace” (par. 1). Lawmakers in a number of states have become major proponents of cutting humanities courses and funding. In a *Huffington Post* article, Brian Rosenberg—president of Macalester College—highlights the recent decision of North Carolina Governor Patrick McCrory to develop legislation that would provide funds to universities based on students’ future productivity. McCrory’s new policy, in his own words, would no longer base funding on ““butts in the seats but on how many of those butts can get jobs”” (par. 4). Meanwhile, Florida Governor Rick Scott is proposing legislation that would lower tuition rates to students majoring in STEM fields (Tietelbaum par. 1).

In response to these charges, humanities professors and supporters have mounted a defense of their fields, arguing for their relevance and applicability. Many educators have argued that the humanities provide a number of skills on which employers place a

high premium. For example, Brian Rosenberg argues that “a liberal arts education has been shown to provide especially good training” in skills like “critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to work cooperatively” (par. 10). Others have claimed that a humanities education provides a broad knowledge base that allows for success in the job market. Hunter Rawlings, president of the AAU, notes that “many of the kids graduating from college these days are going to hold a number of different jobs in their lives, and many of those jobs have not yet been invented. For a world like that, what’s the best education? Seems to me it’s a very general education that enables you to think critically” (Bruni par. 16). Still other educators have claimed that the current focus on getting students jobs is removing universities from their true purpose. In “Why STEM Should Care about the Humanities,” Kira Hamman claims “we all know that a broad education, including literature and the arts, makes people better students, better citizens, and, yes, better employees. If we don’t stand up for the humanities, we might end up somewhere we really don’t want to be, and fast” (par. 3).

These contemporary arguments closely parallel debates over humanities education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially in the reasons given for supporting humanities education. Understanding an earlier moment in the history of American attacks on and defenses of humanities education helps put the current debate into a larger historical context. Then and now, the debate is defined by one central question: for what future jobs or occupations is education supposed to be preparing students? Exploring the ramifications of this question at the turn-of-the-century provides some compelling

insights regarding children, practical education, and class stratification during this time period.

Critical studies of education emphasize the complex landscape of educational ideology at the turn of the last century. Herbert Kliebard's *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* identifies three dominant groups who emerged in the late 19th century, each promoting a distinct ideology regarding education. The first group wanted the schools to provide different types of courses for different types of students so that each student would have the specific skills he needed to play his role in adult society as effectively as possible and so society could run as smoothly as possible. For example, G. Stanley Hall asserted that different subject matter should be taught to different students on the basis of ability, thereby preparing each child for the specific vocation he would have in the future.¹⁸ The second group wanted the school to focus primarily on ameliorating social problems because they believed that only through education could society be reformed. Accordingly, these individuals worked to apply business models to the schools order to promote efficiency and create a well-ordered, less contentious society. Creating this type of society necessitated establishing a curriculum in which students were also enrolled in courses on the basis of ability. The curricular models supported by these first two groups depended upon the idea of class stratification since the education that children would receive would be entirely dependent upon the job they would have in the future. However, the third group of educators, who supported a broader, humanities based

¹⁸ He also wanted differentiation based on gender since, according to Kliebard, he wanted to avoid the feminization of boys and the loss of feminine characteristics in girls (41).

education for all children, claimed that all children should have the same educational opportunities regardless of their potential future vocation. They believed it was the job of the school to establish reasoning power in all individuals and held that “the right selection of subjects, along with the right way of teaching them, could develop citizens of all classes” (10). Although the state of educational theory at the turn of the century was contentious, it is clear that these three groups of educators could at least agree that the schools needed to be able to develop productive and useful citizens.

Those supporting vocational education—or other curricula that enrolled students in courses on the basis of ability—claimed that a humanities-based curriculum did not help prepare students for their futures in the workforce. For this reason, those supporting the humanities needed to establish a connection between humanities education and the development of useful citizens; without this strong causal link, their educational philosophies would be ignored or seen as obsolete by those who were promoting different curricula. Though it is difficult to determine how all of the educators and reformers promoting humanities education accomplished this goal, those educators who contributed to the journal *Education* claimed that the humanities were practical and necessary because these courses provided a broad swath of skills that could be used in any number of jobs, thereby ensuring that the child would develop the abilities he would need to succeed in his future vocation and contribute to his community. By making this argument, these educators could assert that humanities courses were more practical than they appeared—and, in fact, were more practical than the vocational and industrial

courses that were replacing them, especially since, as they believed, the humanities were the best way to create strong, productive, community-minded citizens. However, it wasn't just these educators who were working to promote humanities education.

Although it is sometimes assumed that Horatio Alger's boys' books, published around the same time this particular debate began, promoted the acquisition of specific practical and business skills in keeping with the books supposed "up by your own bootstraps" ideology, in fact they are far more supportive of humanities education. All but one of the characters in the twenty novels sampled for this chapter receive a humanities-based education—sometimes in and sometimes out of the classroom—that helps them gain the jobs and the respectability that they all desire. In addition, like the educational theorists supporting the humanities, Alger also creates a link between community-minded citizens and humanities courses by including in his texts well-educated, middle class characters who are invested in helping others in their communities, especially those who are less fortunate. Finally, by populating his books with individuals who not only receive an education based in the humanities but who also are good citizens, these books also act as primers for their readers, showing them how to be responsible community members. Through their encounters with these characters, the young readers learn what values, ideals, and beliefs mark the good citizen, and, conversely, what behaviors they should avoid.

Both Alger and those writing in *Education* promoted the humanities because they believed these courses could create good productive citizens and a strong community.

Yet despite their claims that encouraging all children to study the humanities would promote the democratic ideal of equality, the vision of humanities education promoted by both Alger and humanities supporters in *Education* was entirely compatible with class stratification. Even though the contributors to *Education* believed that all children should receive the same rich, humanities-based education, this curriculum was a means of ensuring that every citizen would be content with his place in life rather than a means of providing a way for every citizen to improve his condition. For Alger, humanities education did not enable class mobility because he linked class mobility entirely to good character which one would have prior to seeking a humanities education. Thus, the desire for a humanities education in Alger's books is a reflection of class status, not a means of obtaining a particular class status. Neither Alger nor those contributing to *Education* wanted to challenge class hierarchies; instead, they used humanities education to rationalize communities that were based on these hierarchies.

In this chapter, I will first explore the rationale the contributors to *Education* used to support humanities education. This discussion will focus on how these contributors argued that this particular form of education was the best means of preparing children for the future and of creating good, civic-minded citizens. By uncovering the rationale used by these educators to render humanities education practical, I will reveal the connection between their ideology and Alger's texts. This connection is a crucial one because while critics have explored the uses of humanities education in Alger's texts, they have not explored the similarities between Alger's rationale of humanities education and the

rationale used by turn-of-the-century educators to support courses in English, history, and modern languages. By establishing this connection, I show that the discussion of the practical humanities appearing in educational discourse had implications outside the educational arena. In addition, I will show that neither the humanists nor Alger are as democratic as they appear since their promotion of the humanities became a way to rationalize class stratification. Finally, this chapter will end with an analysis regarding the ways in which Alger and those supporting the humanities sought to avoid cheapening the courses they felt were so vital to the establishment of a strong, cohesive community.

THE PRACTICAL HUMANITIES

Turn of the century educators who supported the humanities were on the defensive, attempting to protect their courses in an increasingly unreceptive educational environment. The contributors to the journal *Education* provide a good representative sample of how these educators attempted to counter the claims of other educators regarding the inherent impracticality of humanities education. Their argument for the humanities focused primarily on the claim that the supposedly “practical” subjects weren’t actually practical at all and that subjects that had been labeled irrelevant or unnecessary had more value than short-sighted educators and administrators acknowledged. For example, in arguing for the value of humanities courses, John W. Dickinson asserts that the very concept of practicality has been defined incorrectly in discussions of education. He claims that truly practical men are “those who have the largest and most symmetrical development of their active power” and, therefore, claims

that a practical education should focus on “a general cultivation of the individual... before his activities are turned to an unnatural channel by the pursuit of any trade or profession” (305).¹⁹ In other words, the most practical courses are those that focus on developing broader, less specific, skill sets, not those that provide students with immediate job training. According to Dickinson, only a broad humanities education would “bring [the boy] to his special work with a trained mind, a strong will, and a manly spirit” (303). In addition, by focusing on broader, less specific training, schools could ensure that the boy would be prepared to succeed in any occupation whether in business or in the manufacturing/industrial sector. The versatility offered by these cultural courses makes them inherently more practical than the vocational or commercial courses that limited a student’s future.

In addition, the contributors to *Education* argued that vocational courses lacked practicality because these courses, unlike the humanities, did not attend to the development of proper moral and social behavior nor did they work to create productive and community-minded citizens who could work well with others and put the needs of others before their own. Emerson E. White’s 1893 article claims that vocational education cannot even be said to provide a proper education, which he defines as that which develops a man’s character. White advocates an education that “seeks the perfection of man in nature” and “prepares the mind to think the truth, the heart to enjoy it, the will to purpose it, and the hand to perform it” (68). According to White, this

¹⁹ In his discussion of the purpose of literature, W.E. Aiken echoes Dickinson’s point: “The purpose of technical training is to enable its possessor to earn a living, that of literature is to make that living, when earned, more worth having” (37).

education is based in the humanities. According to a number of contributors, a humanities education also teaches one to be kinder and more understanding to others and can even cure one of his prejudices and make him more open-minded. In 1902, J.D. Crawford wrote that the study of history, among other benefits, allows us to “learn tolerance and charity for our fellows” (110). Edward McMahon also holds this to be true. He argues that “history properly taught liberalizes the mind and forces it from prejudice, narrowness, and selfishness” (110). Each of these educators points to humanities education as the best means of producing good citizens with good characters.

These educators claimed that a truly practical education is one that prepares a student to obtain the skills needed to succeed in a variety of jobs and sees to his moral and social development. In other words, they believed a practical humanities education could ensure the development of social consciousness. For example, in his 1914 article on the place of history in the curriculum, Samuel Burnett Howe argues that

Above all we need that manly, that noble, that unselfish love of country which the story of our history alone can inspire, and when through it they have molded the characters of their pupils; when through it they have given us a generation of intelligent freemen... when they shall have done all this they will have the proud consciousness of knowing that they have guaranteed the future to those who are to follow us, and the country will owe them a debt of gratitude which it can never fully repay. (450)

Those who believed that the humanities helped individuals learn proper social and moral behavior highlighted the fact that these individuals were better able to assist and aid fellow citizens and would also be less likely to be a blot on their communities, since, ideally, these individuals are more able and willing to rid themselves of prejudices and

other behaviors that make a person an inadequate member of society. So, according to these educators, the only way to develop community members with social consciousness who could move away from an unhealthy focus on the self and on the materialistic aspects of life was to further promote the humanities. As Edward McMahon argues, “education in history will lift the individual man or woman out of the narrow grind of routine duties so characteristic of ordinary life; lift them up into the larger sphere of communion with the great thoughts that have made our world” (112). But despite these rapturous ideals, these educators were unable to achieve the larger democratic objectives they had for humanities education. Creating a curriculum in which all students would take the same courses meant, in theory, that they should have the same opportunities in the future, but in practice, this system couldn’t work. For one, these educators seemed to realize that it wouldn’t be practical or wise for all individuals to be middle-class; if they were, society would shut down. For another, while they could guarantee that all students had access to the same classes and learned the same lessons in school, they couldn’t guarantee that all students would have the same opportunities outside the school. Although Progressive Era reformers and educators attempted to assert some control over students’ home lives by educating families, especially mothers, to meet the needs of their children as effectively as possible, these efforts were not always successful and did not always have permanent results.²⁰ Thus, these educators had to alter how they imagined and articulated the democratic potential of the humanities.

²⁰ For more on familial and maternal education, see Lawrence Cremin, “Child Saving and Social Service

If they couldn't offer class mobility through humanities education, then they could at least offer the enjoyments and aesthetics of middle-class life to working-class individuals which, in turn, could provide a certain degree of equality during non-working hours. For example, according to E.A. Cross's 1913 article, "The Experimental Course in English," "the main purpose of teaching literature... is to create a desire to read good literature, so that after a hard day's work the plumber or skirt fitter or housekeeper (our pupils grown up) may find diversion [and] instruction... rather than entertainment in melodramatic picture shows, yellow newspapers, and the cheapest magazines" (411). In his 1894 article "Aesthetic Side of Education," Henry Lincoln Clapp argues that "a system of education that does not make definite provision for the leisure part of life is sadly defective" (451). So, as Clapp claimed, "aesthetic enjoyment... being a positive and permanent addition to the sum of life's highest pleasures must be an essential in the preparation of children or adults for complete living" (454). Anna Harris's assessment of composition and literature also claims that while the humanities must "train [the boy] to be efficient in society and in business in the modern world," these courses should also "prepare some pleasure for the leisure hours, some comfort for the lonely and quiet hours so inevitable in every life" (561). None of these educators makes any claim that the humanities could give one the skills to enter into the middle class, but they do argue that the humanities can help create more fulfilled individuals. However, this argument rests

Agency" chapter six in *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988) and Michael B. Katz, *Reconstructing American Education* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987)

on three problematic viewpoints.²¹ First, the desire to provide some of the pleasures of middle-class life to the working class rests on the assumption that the enjoyments and values of the middle class are better and more beneficial than those of any other group. Second, affording middle-class enjoyments to the working class provided a way of policing the leisure activities of this group and preventing them from reading dime novels or other cheap literature and attending melodramas. In addition, ensuring that all individuals share the same enjoyments was one step toward ensuring that all individuals share the same values system. Finally, and most importantly, while a humanities education provided members of the working class with some of the pleasures of the middle class, it also guaranteed that these individuals would be more content in their jobs and, therefore, would become better laborers—though, if read sympathetically, this final issue could be seen as a way to guarantee social stability rather than a means of keeping the working class in their “place.”

Still, the existence of these problems underscores the conflict between the ideals and practices in humanities education at the turn of the century. In making the argument for the benefits, values, and practicality of humanities education, these educators needed to acknowledge that staying useful and relevant necessitated altering some of their educational ideals, namely their ideas regarding the democratic potential of education. As William Bullough argues in *Cities and Schools in the Gilded Age*, those supporting the humanities finally came to define the public school “as an agency for maintaining

²¹ It is important to note here that it is unclear if these educators were aware of these issues. Thus, we cannot and should not assume that these educators had bad intent.

harmonious relationships among social classes rather than for changing relationships or eliminating barriers” (87). So, by claiming that the humanities could offer all individuals of all classes access to the same diversions, these educators used the school to ensure that all individuals of all classes shared similar values which, in turn, ensured social stability. Thus, these educators’ claims that courses in English, history, languages, and geography can help develop good citizens for a democratic society were based on the acknowledgement that having a well-functioning society depends on social stratification. According to those writing in *Education*, the humanities created good communities by developing citizens who shared a similar values system and who were willing to play their designated roles in society thereby ensuring the stability of the current social order.

ALGER’S NOVELS AND THE HUMANITIES

Though it may initially appear otherwise, Alger’s novels are also not invested in breaking down or removing class barriers. In fact, as innumerable critics have noted, these books aren’t even about rising from rags to riches since Alger’s boys are seeking respectability rather than wealth.²² While these critics have articulated the class concerns in Alger’s novels, they have not explored how humanities education in Alger’s texts actually supports class stratification—which is something this argument hopes to accomplish. However, before we can explore the intersection of education, community,

²² For example, see Gary Scharnhorst, “The Moral Foundation of the Juvenile Fiction,” chapter four in *Horatio Alger, Jr.*, Roy Schwartzman, “Recasting the American Dream Through Horatio Alger’s Success Stories” (*Studies in American Culture*, vol. 23, issue 2), and Michael Zuckerman, “The Nursery Tales of Horatio Alger” (*American Quarterly*, vol. 24, issue 2).

and class in Alger's texts we must first examine Alger's views on education. According to Gary Scharnhorst, Alger believed education to be highly valuable due to his Unitarian upbringing and because he worked as a teacher and a private tutor for over two decades.²³ Consequently, it is no surprise that "Alger acclaimed the social role of education in his books and often wove instruction in a variety of subjects into the fabric of his narratives" (112). This instruction focused mostly on the humanities; Scharnhorst contends that though Alger's books "contain examples of elementary bookkeeping, math problems for readers to solve, and lessons in grammar and punctuation... far more frequently Alger sought to instruct his readers in the more liberal branches of learning" (114). In addition, Alger, like those supporting the humanities, believed education was necessary and useful "because it could spark the reformation of students and societies" (112). Alger's high regard for education and the benefits it brings to both the individual and society is articulated in his texts in a number of ways.

First, nearly all of Alger's protagonists actively seek and obtain a humanities education. Due to dire financial circumstances, most of his characters are unable to pursue an education within the story proper because they must work to support themselves and occasionally their families. However, upon resolving their financial troubles, many of these characters choose to pursue, continue, or finish their formal education, and this education typically emphasizes the humanities. For example, at the

²³ According to Scharnhorst, "Alger also shared the vaulted Unitarian faith in the importance of liberal education as a tool of social reform" (112). Scharnhorst notes that the Unitarians believed that the school and the church were equally important as character-building institutions that helped individuals develop good habits and strong, religious principles.

end of *Adrift in the City*, the protagonist, Oliver, “concluded his preparations for college” and ultimately decided to “become a lawyer”—a profession Alger configures as one that has its basis in the humanities—so that he could “champion the cause of the poor and the oppressed” (325). The characters who choose not to attend college or continue their formal education usually continue their education through informal study. In *Do and Dare*, we are told that though the protagonist Herbert “was prospering financially, he did not neglect the cultivation of his mind” (268). Accordingly, Herbert spent his free time reading “a number of standard histories, some elementary books in French... a treatise on natural philosophy, and a German grammar and reader” (268). By the end of the text, Herbert has become “a very credible scholar in French, German, and English literature” (303). Clearly, the self-education or informal education Alger’s boys receive is also based primarily in the humanities. Whether their education is formal or informal, none of these characters chooses to engage in courses that specifically emphasize vocational skills. Instead, they focus on learning languages and refining their reading skills, thus revealing that these boys, and by extension Alger himself, have a high respect and appreciation for humanities education.

Not only do Alger’s boys choose to pursue a humanities education but almost all of them are described as good students who find enjoyment in reading and in study. Harry, the protagonist of *Facing the World*, is inordinately fond of geography. We are told that “it was his favorite study” so he was compelled to “read as many books of travel as he could lay his hands on” (148). Harry’s friend Jack also valued and enjoyed school

since, as he tells Harry, “I was always fond of my books, and stood high in school” though his education unfortunately had to end once he turned thirteen (181). Ernest, the hero of *The Young Bank Messenger*, “had a literary taste, but could not get hold of books” (36). Whenever he did find a book, he would “read [it] over and over again,” and should a newspaper find its way into his hands, it was “devoured, advertisements and all” (37). Innumerable Alger heroes, like Luke Larkin from *Struggling Upward* and Kit Watson from *The Young Acrobat*, are able to maintain good rank in their classes, usually despite setbacks, economic or otherwise. In the case of the rare Alger hero who does not like or want to attend school, Alger is careful to point out that the boy doesn’t value education only because he is young and does not yet know or understand the importance education will play in his future life. Eventually, even these reluctant scholars are impelled to see the worth of education by their parents or other well-meaning adults.

While Alger’s characters clearly respect cultural education and enjoy their schooling, they also see this type of education as imminently useful. Typically in Alger’s books, the supposedly impractical subjects actually help characters obtain jobs. In *Silas Snobden’s Office Boy*, Frank, the book’s main character, is offered a tutoring job by a wealthy man, Allen Palmer, mainly due to his good education. Palmer asks him about his educational background; Frank tells Palmer that he ““managed to attend school till I was fourteen and then I was ready to enter the New York College. I passed the examination, but found when the term began that I could not spare the time required”” (87). Frank’s good education (as well as his fondness for children) compels Palmer to offer him a job

teaching and entertaining his young son, Rob. In *Adrift in New York*, one of Alger's rare female characters, Florence, also obtains a job because of her education. She is offered a position as a tutor, a job at which she excels because she "was not only an excellent scholar, but she had the art of imparting knowledge and... was able to in a few luminous words to explain difficulties and make clear what seemed to be obscure" (173).

A humanities education also ensures that the boy who is hired is an individual of impeccable moral character. In Alger's novels, it is nearly impossible to find a good character who is not highly invested in his own education. Often the first description of a boy notes both his good character and his good standing in the classroom. For example, in *Brave and Bold*, the novel's protagonist, Robert Rushdon, is described first as a favorite of the teacher and then as a "general favorite" in the class because he is "strong and resolute, when there was occasion, frank and earnest at all times" (2-3). The texts abound with descriptions such as these. In fact, there are so many textual examples that parallel virtue and education that it is easier to show the villains who do not respect education than it is to outline and describe all the characters who both value education and are upright, moral people. Exploring these negative examples is also far more illustrative of Alger's conception of the link between good behavior and education because they show all the adverse effects that occur when one does not respect or value education.

Middle-class villains in Alger's books usually view education as a means of connecting with and impressing members of the upper class rather than a means of

bettering the self. In *Mark Mason's Victory*, Mark's uncle, Mr. Talbot, who has previously defrauded Mark, sent his son "to a fashionable school where he instructed him to be especially attentive to his wealthier schoolfellows" (205). The villain in *A Debt of Honor* sends his son to school with the same instructions. Mr. Wentworth—a man who refuses to pay money owed to the hero, Gerald—sends his son and heir, Victor, to college "partly to secure educational advantages, but partly also because he thought it would give him an opportunity to make friends in high social position" (117). While Alger did believe that a "benefit of a sound education was its marketability," he did not think that education should solely be a means of elevating status (Scharnhorst 113). These villains, however, are unable to see the spiritual or social benefits of education; they can only focus on the crass, materialistic advantages offered by and through schooling, which, of course, makes sense given that it is their love of money that always motivates their actions and, in the end, causes their downfall.

The lower-class villains usually have no interest in education for any reason, viewing it as a waste of time and energy. They also have an intense dislike of those characters who are, or who want to be, educated, believing them to be pretentious and haughty. *The Young Acrobat*, for example, features lower class characters who have no time for education. The book's hero, Kit, is indentured to Mr. Bickford, a blacksmith who is neither able to use proper English nor fond of reading and study. Following Mr. Bickford's first conversation with Kit, Alger, in an authorial aside to the reader, notes that "Mr. Bickford was not always strictly grammatical in his language" (43). Later,

once Kit is installed at the Bickford household, he attempts to find a book to read to pass the time, but finds “nothing to read except a weekly paper, three months old, and a copy of ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’” because “neither Mr. Bickford nor his wife were of a literary turn, and did not even manage to keep up with the news of the day” (50). Alger’s villains combine their lack of regard for education with cruel treatment of Alger’s heroes. For example, Mr. Bickford attempts to force an unwilling Kit to work for him through coercion and force. It is only luck that allows Kit to escape this perilous situation and free himself from the clutches of the cruel, cheap, and uneducated Mr. Bickford.

While these villains reveal the connection between poor character and a failure to respect or value education, they also reveal that, for Alger, respect for education is closely connected to class. Looking at the lower-class characters, this connection seems obvious. These characters have no option for upward mobility because they are not educated and have no interest in education. Thus, their lack of schooling will ensure their permanent lower-class status. However, the middle and upper-class villains make this connection more complicated. By all accounts, these characters are nowhere near the lower class monetarily. Still, Alger makes it clear that these characters are unworthy of this status due to their poor character, as indicated by their inability to respect or value education. Accordingly, these characters lose their money and status and often end up dependent upon the heroes. In *Mark Mason’s Victory*, Mr. Talbot refuses to give Mark and his mother the inheritance that is rightfully theirs, choosing instead to lie and cheat to keep this money for himself and for his son. His desire to obtain more and more money

leads him down the dangerous path of speculation which ultimately causes him to lose the majority of his wealth as well as his status. The books abound in wealthy villains like Mr. Talbot who are brought low due to their poor morals and poor decisions, but there are also characters who maintain their status because they ultimately reveal themselves to be good moral members of the middle class. Mr. Wentworth, the supposed villain from *A Debt of Honor*, is allowed to maintain his upper-class status because he agrees to give Gerald the money that is owed him and because he is even able to admit that “I have been wrong all these years” by not restoring the money sooner (301). More importantly, he is also able to see that he was wrong to force his son to get an education only for the purposes of social improvement and begins to see the value in helping his son develop a good character through hard work. In Alger’s books, class is based on character rather than on money; so, if one has a proper character—or if he is able to reform his character—then he is inevitably a member of the middle or upper-class. Consequently, all of Alger’s heroes, regardless of their station initially, belong to the middle or upper-class, at least on a cultural and personal level, due to their good character and respect for education.

Because of Alger’s conception of class, his books do not suggest a causal link between the development of good morals and humanities education, unlike those promoting the humanities in the pages of *Education*. In Alger’s books, the good moral individuals want to be well-educated because receiving a humanities-based education is what good moral individuals do. So, rather than arguing that receiving a humanities

education turns one into a productive and moral community member, Alger claims that just wanting a humanities education marks one as an individual of good morals and good character. However, like those promoting the humanities in *Education*, Alger does use this education to rationalize class stratification and justify a meritocracy based on inherent virtues not on obtainable skills. As John Cawelti argues, in order to be “a fit candidate for a higher place in society,” Alger’s hero had to possess “the full complement of middle-class virtues” (117). Crucially, one of these virtues is desire for education since “the ability to learn French or Latin, although he might never have an opportunity to use such a skill, shows that the hero has a respect for learning as an end in itself and is no mere materialist” (117-18).²⁴ Unsurprisingly, all of Alger’s heroes who begin the novel desiring or valuing education end up on top—or at least in the warm embrace of middle-class respectability—by the end of the novels. For many of his heroes, this reversal of fortune is not all that surprising as these characters are never truly considered a part of the lower classes; many of these characters actually seem to be living in “genteel poverty.” Thus, exploring the implications of Alger’s meritocracy requires examining his supposedly lower-class heroes.

In *Adrift in New York*, the protagonist, Dodger, notes his lack of education and states that this lack stands in the way of his attempts to raise himself to a higher class.

²⁴ Carol Nackenoff makes this same claim, arguing that “even the poorest Alger hero was likely to acquire a book to improve himself, learning how to read or teaching himself some other part of the common school curriculum. The most untutored could acquire the moral grammar” (47). For more see “Republican Rites of Passage: Character and the Battle for Youth,” chapter 3 from *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994). Like Cawelti and Nackenoff, Gary Scharnhorst also argues, “knowledge is evidence of moral worth or respectability, and Alger’s heroes desperately struggle to obtain it” (113).

When talking to Florence, he observes their apparent class difference, saying that ““you're a reg'lar lady, anyway. You ain't one of my kind, but I'm going to improve and raise myself. I was readin' the other day of a rich man that was once a poor boy and sold papers like me. But there's one thing in the way - I ain't got no eddication”” (168). Dodger’s dialect and poor grammar show him to be a member of the lower class, since the inability to use proper English is a clear class marker for Alger. However, unlike Alger’s lower-class villains, Dodger actively seeks education. He is first educated by Florence who not only instructs him in traditional subjects but also teaches him how to use proper language so that he can be refined. Then, he is educated by fellow passenger during a five month journey to California in hopes of being “the equal to most office boys” once he arrives in San Francisco (179). Dodger’s desire to be educated, accompanied by the other middle-class virtues he practices and espouses, signal that he is worthy of being restored to what turns out to have been his upper-class status at the end of the novel. Accordingly, the novel’s final pages relate Dodger’s reinstatement to his father and his former wealth. Unlike Alger’s lower-class villains who have no possibility of upward mobility, his lower-class heroes end up on the road to respectability by text’s end. Initially, it seems that education is the key to upward mobility for these characters. Further analysis, however, reveals that entrance into the middle or upper class is not the result of education. Instead, their entrance into the higher classes is ensured because they are not, in fact, entering these classes. Due to their investment in education and their

inherent middle-class virtues, they have, in fact, always been a part of the middle or upper class in every sense but the financial. Thus, their supposed rise is actually a return.

Like the contributors to *Education*, Alger is also invested in using the humanities to create class stability, though he creates this class stability a fundamentally different manner. The contributors argued that providing all individuals the same humanities education would create a society in which all people shared the same middle-class values and were selfless, tolerant, and social-minded. Most importantly, this type of education ensured that those of the lower classes would be fulfilled personally, thereby preventing class dissatisfaction and creating more content workers. For Alger, the creation of a stable society also rests on class stratification since his ideal society is one where those individuals who are educated and possess good character rule over those who are not, and those who are mistreat others are ultimately shamed and removed from their places of power. He seems to believe that this will generate a better, more stable society because it will create individuals who care about each other and try to make their communities better. However, this society is not created because all people have access to a humanities education, especially since Alger does not create a causal relationship between a humanities education and developing civic-minded behavior. Instead, a stable society is created because those who inherently possess good character rise to the top to become charitable and selfless leaders in their communities. His books present innumerable characters who are well-educated and are interested in looking out for the well-being of others, even though they have no real reason to be invested in the lives or

livelihoods of those who are downtrodden and exploited. The well documented and often described patronage system featured in Alger's books provides an excellent example of how Alger's ideal community (and ideal community members) should act in society. For example, in *Do and Dare*, George Melville, a young lawyer who is in poor health, hires the protagonist, Herbert, to be his personal companion, claiming that with Herbert's help he "will have enterprise enough to go hunting and fishing, and follow out in good faith my doctor's directions" (51). Motivating this decision is Melville's awareness of Herbert's poor financial condition. Throughout the rest of the text, Melville continues to look out for Herbert's material and spiritual welfare; at one point, he even proposes to instruct Herbert in foreign languages and philosophy (268).²⁵ Even Alger's heroes, who, unlike their patrons, are often without money or means, do their best to help others. Sometimes this help comes in the form of preventing disasters. In *Mark Mason's Victory*, the title character prevents what would have been an extremely violent bank robbery because Mark is "cooler and more self-possessed than anyone else in the office" (46). While Mark is ultimately rewarded, his actions were not motivated by thoughts of personal gain. Although several of Alger's characters do help prevent massive disasters, most help their fellow man in smaller (though no less significant) ways. In *A Debt of Honor*, Gerald helps Victor, the son of his enemy, Mr. Wentworth. Earlier in the text, Victor had left school to travel with a friend but soon found that his father was not

²⁵ The patron/recipient relationship works almost exactly the same way in *A Debt of Honor*. Gerald, the novel's protagonist, is hired by a wealthy Englishman to be his personal secretary and travelling companion. And in Gerald, he "not only found an agreeable companion, but an intelligent and eager learner" (168). Accordingly, he begins to give "oral lessons in French and German, so Gerald was able to make use of both languages to a limited extent" (168).

willing to finance his escapades. Thus, he was compelled to take a job in a bookstore in Kansas City. When he meets Gerald, he is quite sick with malaria but is both reluctant and unable to leave work since he depends upon his wages to survive (264). Though Gerald knows that Victor is Mr. Wentworth's son, he still offers to help Victor by "[finding] a comfortable home for Victor where he could rest and receive medical attention and [depositing] a sum of money with her [Victor's boss] to defray his expenses" (266). He even offers to be Victor's guardian and his family should Victor's father refuse to take him back. Gerald acts without thought of reward but instead out of a desire to help a less fortunate boy.

Carol Nakenoff argues that Alger believed "those armed with the proper character would help others overcome moral danger" (49). By helping others, these individuals would "help safeguard the morals of the new generation [and] promote the interest of the community" (50). Alger's books create a system whereby his heroes are helped by older members of the community so that, in turn, they can become leaders in their communities who are invested in helping others. As Nakenoff states, "the hero becomes one of those to whom society can look for its regeneration" (51). Consequently, even though Alger does not promote a democratic ideal whereby anyone from any station can rise and become part of the middle class provided that they obtain the proper education, he is showing his audience how a good education, combined with the proper virtues and morals, make one a good community member who actively strives to help others both materially and spiritually. However, because Alger does not create a causal link between

humanities education and the development of good character, he is assuming that his readers are already members of the middle-class, have good character, and value education. Thus, they inherently have the ability to be members of Alger's middle class, in which individuals who possess good character and a good education help engender a stable society, based on class stratification, and where people who care about each other rise to the top and those who are selfish and greedy end up removed from positions of power.

THE DANGERS OF PRACTICAL EDUCATION

Those supporting the humanities claimed that their courses were essential to students because they helped develop the skills necessary to become productive, useful citizens who cared about their communities. But they also claimed that that the humanities helped counter the materialism rampant in schools—materialism perpetuated by vocational education courses. For example, Irving Wright Smith's 1916 article "The Future of Latin and Greek" declares that "materialism in education... tends to make of our pupils mere hand-workers who lack the solace of inspirational training and discriminating breadth" (96). According to Smith, the impulse to pare down education to its money-making capacities—an impulse that he believed was found in vocational classes—not only limits the students but also ultimately makes them less able to find a job and make money. As he argues, "business men from one end of the country to the other are beginning to prefer men of the old line education to the more highly specialized graduates of bread-and-butter institutions" (96). By focusing on the humanities, schools

can create students who are “found to possess greater possibilities for development” not limited to their ability to make money (96). Other educators claimed that materialism was dangerous to the development of a strong, vibrant community because it made the student overly concerned with himself and his own well-being. In his 1918 article on foreign languages in public schools, Charles W. Super argues that “it is a vicious policy to keep before the minds of children from the time they enter school the thought that the only goal to be striven for is wealth... it is a false test of citizenship” (44). William Sayers states even more bluntly that courses promoting materialism are poised to destroy the fabric of American society. He declares that “the greatest danger threatening the world today... is the commercial spirit that prompts men and corporations to enrich themselves as the dire necessities of the time give them opportunity” (231). The implication here is that these men care far more about meeting their own needs than they do about shoring up or maintaining a democratic society in which everyone can benefit.

These educators had two reasons for insisting that, unlike vocational courses, the humanities created citizens who were invested in the good of the community rather than only being invested in the accumulation of material goods and money. First, by making this claim these educators could alleviate their own worries that in arguing for the practicality of the humanities—and claiming that the humanities provided skills necessary to succeed in the workforce—they were making these courses every bit as materialistic as vocational courses. Second, they could argue that humanities courses did more than just prepare students for jobs. Instead, the skills and lessons offered through a

humanities education helped develop the whole child. Since their overarching goal was to make well-rounded individuals, creating productive workers could be considered only one by-product of that larger mission, not the central aim of humanities education. In other words, they could argue, in order to be a well-rounded person, one needs to be able to contribute to society, but he also needs to develop proper moral and social behavior. As they argued, only the humanities could see to the education of the whole person—both in and outside of the workplace—and develop him into a productive, socially-aware community member.

Katherine Puncheon's 1914 assessment of the place of vocational and liberal studies makes exactly this claim. Her article begins with a comparison between what she terms the "new education" (one that is primarily vocationally based) and the traditional humanities course. She claims that this new education "tests all training by its immediate commercial value" (341). The humanities, on the other hand, allow for the "establishment of self-respect, the development of self-control, [and] an honest desire to play fair" (342). However, she goes on to note that some educators believe that the humanities' "considerable commercial value" is more important than its other benefits. She refutes this claim by arguing that education should not be defined only by its usefulness or what it can offer students when they enter the workforce; instead, a good education—one that can be provided by "liberal studies"—helps "to prepare boys and girls for a larger life than mere wage-earning" (346). In fact, she claims that educators must recognize that "preparation for wage-earning is only one part of preparation for life"

and, further, must guarantee that the schools can provide students with that “larger, fuller, broader, preparation that makes for complete living” (347). According to Puncheon, while this education sees to the child’s ability to obtain the technical proficiency needed to succeed in his chosen field, it also, more importantly, sees to the physical, mental, social, and character development of the child. Ultimately, a humanities education can create “self-reliant, self-respecting, high-minded, strong hearted young men and young women with well-trained minds in strong and vigorous bodies and with the capacity for service to themselves, to the community, to the state and to the nation developed to its highest power” (349). For Puncheon, the goal of a humanities education is to create a well-rounded individual. Though this individual will eventually need vocational skills in order to be a productive and useful member of society, obtaining these skills is only one small part of his education.

Alger’s books contain a similar argument regarding the goal of humanities education. His characters are interested in obtaining good jobs, and they use their humanities education to accomplish this goal. However, none of these characters are motivated by money and goods. In fact, as previously mentioned, the characters in these novels who are materialistic are always depicted as villains and are nearly always removed from positions of power. These characters misuse their humanities education because they are only using it as a means of obtaining money or class mobility. Therefore, they are very much like the educators in Puncheon’s article who believe that a curriculum is only valuable when it has a particular commercial value. Alger’s villains

are limiting the possibility of the humanities by only using it as a way to make money. Alger's heroes, on the other hand, appreciate the broader purpose of an education which is to help one to develop morally and socially, and, ultimately, make him into a good, productive member of society who cares about the well-being of others. However, this aspect of Alger's heroes is somewhat problematic because, even though these heroes do appreciate all that a humanities education has to offer, all of them end up with a good amount of money by the end of their respective texts. The only way to sidestep this problem is to show that these material rewards are only a by-product of having good character not the reason to have a good character—just as Puncheon claimed that the vocational skills that came with humanities courses were only one element of a comprehensive education. Alger's heroes are put in situations where their education can help them make money, but none of these characters starts out with the goal of becoming wealthy. When they do look for work, it is because they—or their families—are in dire circumstances and must find work or they will lose their homes or other necessary goods. When the heroes do have money at their disposal, they often use these resources to help others; thus, their riches actually provide another medium through which they can display their good characters. Alger's books show that gaining material goods or money is not the goal of humanities education, but if one does obtain money, a humanities education can help him use his money wisely and well.

By associating the humanities with the creation of well-rounded citizens, those educators advocating these courses could both ensure the relevance of their curriculum

and avoid cheapening or degrading the skills that they offered to students. As they argued, the humanities weren't just useful in the marketplace; they were useful for living. By making the same argument, Alger could show his readers that they should value a humanities education because it offered so much more than just a way to be a commercial success. In fact, his books contain an implicit warning that if the readers themselves cheapen their education, they will end up like the villains in these books—greedy and self-centered—and they will never achieve any form of success in or out of the workforce. Ultimately, all of these authors attempted to show that a truly practical education is one that does more than just prepare the child to be a worker. In order to be practical, an education needed to develop the whole child and fit him to live a productive, happy, and healthy life. Thus, in the end, the contributors to *Education* could argue—and Alger could show—that a humanities education is indeed the most, and perhaps the only, practical education.

CHAPTER TWO—How Should the Children Play: The Playground Movement and Louisa May Alcott

INTRODUCTION

The humanities were not the only part of education that was being defended as crucial to the development of children; educators, writers, and reformers were also arguing that play could serve a number of practical purposes in the life of the child. For example, Ellen Key's *The Century of The Child*, published in 1900, contains a chapter specifically devoted to the education of children. In this chapter, Key claims that play is essential to the child's education and development because play provides a medium through which the child can exercise his imagination while also allowing him to learn social skills. As she notes, when adults play with children, they must "leave behind every kind of educational idea and go completely into the child's world of thought and imagination" (168). By following the child's imaginative thought in play, the adults can ensure that these games "increase confidence between children and adults" and allow children to "know their elders better" (169). So, the child's imaginative games can be used to teach proper social behavior. However, it is not enough just to have time to engage in play. As Key insists, children also need designated spaces in which to engage in these creative and imaginative games so that they can, again, learn proper behavior.

Key claims that

If children were free in their own world the nursery, but out of it had to submit to the strict limits imposed by the habits, wills, work, and repose of parents, their requirements and their wishes, they would develop into a stronger and more considerate race than the youth of the present day. It is not so much talking about

being considerate but the necessity of considering others... that has an educational value. (169)

In this discussion of play in education, Key suggests that play can achieve two different goals. First, play can provide an outlet for the child's imagination. Second, play can be a means of helping the child develop mentally and socially. Though it may seem that the two goals Key applies to play are working at cross-purposes, they are actually very closely entwined. Key argues that play can be used as a developmental tool to justify the activity of play in the lives of children. Although children may view their activities as pointless fun, adults can see the educational potential within these activities; in short, adults could see the practicality of play.

Key's assessment of play is echoed in the journal *The Playground*—the primary publication of the Playground Association of America (PAA), the central institution of the play and playground movement. The contributors to this journal also argued that play was one of the primary means through which the child learned and developed, and, accordingly, claimed that children must be provided safe spaces in which to play. In a description of the playground needs in Washington, a PAA committee claimed that playgrounds must be “within reasonable walking distance of every child” because play “is essential to the health, as well as the physical, social, and moral well-being of the child”; therefore, as this committee argued, playgrounds are “a necessity for all children—as much as schools” (12). In addition, the PAA used play's developmental capacities to argue for its relevance in the lives of children. For example, the first volume of *The Playground* contains a call to action, informing the public of the need for

playgrounds in New York City. The author of this article claims that a system of playgrounds and recreation centers would enable “well-chosen leaders, without restricting the natural freedom of play, to train the boundless energy of its youth toward useful and loyal citizenship” (8). The author argues that the child’s natural, free play should be allowed and seen as practical and useful because it starts the child down the pathway to productive citizenship.

Rationalizing the existence of play in the lives of children by showing its educational potential is not specific to the discourse of the early 20th century. Louisa May Alcott’s books, published nearly three decades before the inception of the play and playground movement, also justify play in this manner. Alcott’s books *Little Men* and *Jack and Jill* contain a number of scenes that depict children’s free, imaginative play; however, a fictional adult or the adult narrator always frames and defines these scenes of play so that the reader can understand that this play is serving an important developmental and very practical purpose. Since Alcott also justifies play in her texts by showing that it can be used as an educational tool, it could be assumed that this need to rationalize play did not arise with the formal codification of the play movement in the early 20th century, but, rather, has its beginning with the establishment of the kindergarten movement in the 1870s and in the very early moments of the play movement. When play became a part of the curriculum, it altered the terms under which educators and authors discussed and argued for the necessity of play in the lives of children.

Like the educators promoting the humanities discussed in the previous chapter, those contributing to *The Playground* validated the playground and play's presence in the school curriculum by showing the practical and useful ends play could achieve. However, the PAA wasn't just interested in putting play in the schools. They had broader goals, for example, creating playgrounds and recreation centers in cities, providing play leaders to supervise play, and ensuring that all children, regardless of class, had both the time and the space for play. Thus, their arguments for the practicality of play went beyond the classroom. Alcott, too, was making a broader argument about play in *Little Men* and *Jack and Jill* since neither of these books focuses solely on play occurring within the schoolroom. Still, the members of the PAA and Alcott had different reasons to insist on the practicality of play. The PAA was attempting to convince city governments, parents of all classes, and schools of the validity of play. It is difficult to know the reasons behind Alcott's argument for the practicality of play since, unlike the members of the PAA, she didn't write a clearly articulated statement on the subject. Still, it is known that Alcott's view of children was different than that of her early 20th century counterparts which likely affected her view of play. As Anne Scott MacLeod claims, "Alcott's protagonists were not yet romantic children whose inborn perfection would give them a mission to redeem adults. Her fictional characters still achieved moral character gradually, with effort and lapses, and under the careful tutelage of adults" (150). So, like the members of the PAA, Alcott wanted to show that play, like work and school, could also provide a means of helping children develop moral character.

But regardless of their reasons for insisting on the practicality of play, the end product of their arguments was the same. By showing the very useful ends play could serve, all of these authors could at least make an attempt to ensure that all children of all classes would be permitted both time and space to play. Making this argument, however, also caused these authors some anxiety because they were using play—an activity intended to be in the control of children—to teach and prepare children for their lives as adults. This anxiety arose from the fears that these educators had about corrupting the pure childhood space with economic considerations. These educators wanted childhood to exist as a space outside market value and the adult world of responsibility because they needed to ensure that a space outside capitalism—and the conception of the priceless child—could exist.²⁶ In order to alleviate these worries, these authors claimed that children would not have to be aware of the developmental and educational potential in their imaginative games. By rendering children ignorant of this potential, the members of the PAA and Alcott could accomplish two goals. First, they could use play to serve two purposes simultaneously: for the child, play could be imaginative fun, and for the adult, play could be a means of developing children into productive, socially-minded citizens. Second, because the child would be ignorant of the educational potential in their games, the PAA members and Alcott could ensure that the unadulterated space of childhood could exist.

²⁶ As with the domestic space in the mid-19th century, it is possible that the existence of this space outside labor and profit allowed adults to rationalize and accept the current economic and social order. For more on this see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1977) and Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987).

This chapter will examine the anxieties surrounding the use of play as a form of practical education. I begin by discussing the history of the play and playground movement before moving into an analysis of the argumentative strategies found in *The Playground*. Often, the authors of these articles use layered arguments which allow them to claim that play, for the child, can be a free expression of joy and imagination, and play, for the adult, can be used to develop the child's mental, moral, and social capacities. This analysis will lead to a discussion of class stratification by examining the need the PAA felt to provide play spaces for working class children in order to ensure that these children would develop the skills they would need to succeed in the future. Next, I will discuss scenes of play from Alcott's *Little Men* and *Jack and Jill* to reveal that Alcott, too, used the assumption of childhood ignorance to show that play could serve two simultaneous goals—one for adults and one for children—before exploring the class implications of Alcott's uses of play. Finally, I will turn to the question of why these authors worked so hard to preserve a space for childhood separate from economic or societal concerns. This final discussion will reveal some of the complications present in the conception of childhood itself at the turn of the century.

THE PLAY AND PLAYGROUND MOVEMENT

Understanding how play became a part of the education system is crucial to comprehending the play and playground movement in the early 20th century. Play in education had its beginnings in the late 18th and early 19th centuries with the writings of Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel. According to Harry Good and James Teller in

The History of American Education, Pestalozzi originated the idea that “sense impression of nature is the only true foundation of human instruction” and believed that that the child learned by doing, acting, and engaging with the subject at hand (355). Froebel pushed Pestalozzi’s ideas even further by insisting that it was not just sense learning but play itself that was crucial to the learning process of young children. Froebel developed the first kindergarten in the late 1830s in which he put his ideas about play into practice; the children at Froebel’s kindergarten learned by making craft projects, manipulating objects, and engaging in games with their classmates. Just as Pestalozzi influenced Froebel, so did Froebel influence John Dewey—one of the founders of the progressive kindergarten movement in the United States. Although Dewey rejected some of Froebel’s more specific ideas regarding how to use play in the classroom, he too, argued for the primacy of play in the lives and teaching of young children, claiming that play would help children “function at higher levels of consciousness and action” (Saracho 133). His kindergarten, established in the 1890s, provided guided play for its young pupils so that children could learn to cooperate with others, comprehend the world around them, and become well-functioning adults.²⁷ From these educators’ ideas came the idea that all children, regardless of age, could learn by playing. However, these educators also helped establish the idea that play could help develop the child mentally and morally. In their article “Children’s Play and Early Childhood Education,” Olivia Saracho and Bernard Spodek note that Dewey wanted teachers “to create an environment to nurture play that

²⁷ It is important to note that there were a number of kindergartens established in the United States prior to John Dewey’s. In fact, many kindergartens were created across the country in the 1870s.

would support desirable mental and moral growth in children” (134). In this instance, Dewey was simply discussing how play should function in the school curriculum rather than in the lives of children generally; however, the fact that John Dewey made this particular claim is still compelling because it so closely parallels the ideas about play and development forwarded by those supporting the playground movement.

The middle-class reformers involved in the beginning of the playground movement believed that children’s play could be used to help children develop mentally, morally, socially, and physically. In *A History of Children’s Play and Play Environments*, Joe Frost notes that the first playground, a sand garden, was established in Boston in 1885 and by 1887 “when the number of sand gardens was increased to ten, located in one school and several tenement houses, matrons were hired to supervise” (94). By 1900, “city leaders in the play and playground movement and scholars were learning that play had educational value... and that public funds should be used to secure playground sites, equip them, and provide supervision and maintenance” (Frost 97). These reformers believed that children needed to be provided places to engage in imaginative play so that they could develop the skills they needed for the future. To that end, these reformers worked to create an institution that could see to the management of the play movement and the creation of play spaces. Susan Solomon notes that the founding of the PAA in 1906 “marked the institutionalization of the play movement and the recognition that the public realm was taking responsibility for the activity of children” (8).

While a number of critics have explored how play was integrated into education, they have not explored the anxiety that may have resulted from this use of play as an educational tool. Although it would be difficult to claim that all educators at this time were wrapped up in this anxiety, it is clear that the contributors to *The Playground*, whether consciously or not, were conflicted about using play as a means of developing the child for the future rather than allowing play to be solely a free expression of the child's imagination. Accordingly, they had to create a means of resolving this conflict, one that could allow play to accomplish two goals at the same time. Their resolution was to assert that children did not have to be aware of the lessons they were absorbing through play. Exploring the argumentative strategies used by these contributors will help illustrate this resolution as well as the reasons why this resolution was so crucial.

In his 1909 article "A Study in the Psychology of Play," Frank Nagley uses play's essential place in human nature as a rationale for using it to achieve various educational and developmental ends. Nagley begins his article with the statement that "inherent in every human being are inherited instincts for play" (18). He then goes on to claim that because "the play instinct has a fundamental place in our very natures," we should "see what contribution it makes to our development and progress as human beings" (18). So, the natural play instinct found in children actually provides a bridge into play's preparatory capacities. Nagley claims that children's inherent desire to engage in play can be used to manipulate the curriculum and ensure that children have fun in school while also developing mentally. As Nagley states, "play is always agreeable... play is

more self-expressive in children than work because it calls for the spontaneous interest of the child... he desires to be free and to do those things which seem agreeable to him” (18). So making the child interested in schoolwork is quite simple. Nagley argues that “work may become play if it is made to be self-expressive and hence agreeable. This is the ideal of play. Make the work, play; and the play, work” (18). So, if teachers can make “the work of the schoolroom” mirror the “work of the playground, the more spontaneous and self-expressive it becomes, and the more vital in the development of the child” (19). Ultimately, Nagley argues that the work of the classroom can become play if children are allowed enough freedom for self-expression, thus ensuring that children will have fun in school without even realizing that they are being taught important and formative lessons. Here, Nagley shows how play can be a medium through which children can express themselves as well as a medium for mental development.

In his report on play in institutions, Alexander Johnson directly claims that play can serve two separate purposes simultaneously, one for children and one for adults. Johnson begins by stating that play should not be used as a means to an end, claiming that “it is an expression of life, and therefore, to be promoted because life is good” (39). Three pages later, this same injunction regarding play appears; Johnson notes that “play is life. This is true of all play, but emphatically true of the play of children. We do not play for some other end. Play is an end, not a means” (42). Then, later Johnson insists again that “play must not only be healthful exercise, but a source of enjoyment. It must be real fun. We must do it because we cannot resist it” (42). So, Johnson claims that

play, especially for children, can be purposeless and can exist for pure pleasure and enjoyment. In other words, children do not need to concern themselves—or even be aware of—any other purposes applied to play. However, Johnson goes to note that due to their play activities, the children in institutions “were, at the end of the summer, stronger physically, in a healthier moral condition, less troublesome to the attendant, more self-respecting and self-reliant” (48). Hence, while the children engaged in imaginative games, they also developed physically, morally, and socially—though they themselves were ignorant of these developments. Only the adults were aware of the growth and change that occurred through this play. One statement made in the middle of the article seems to sum up Johnson’s argument regarding play’s two purposes. He states that “of course, properly directed and enjoyed play conduces to other desirable ends, but the other ends are not the reason of play” (42). By insisting that “the other ends are not the reason for play,” he can support the idea that, for children, play should exist for its own sake and should not have other purposes grafted upon it. However, by insisting that “properly directed and enjoyed play conduces to other desirable ends” Johnson can also make the claim that adults can use children’s free play to help them develop physically, mentally, and morally. Thus, Johnson claims that play can serve one purpose for children and another for adults.

Writing in Volume 15 of *The Playground* (1921-1922) Joseph Lee, the president of the PAA, attempts to find a compromise between play’s two purposes by altering his definition of play across two articles. In his first article, “Play—the Fountain of Youth,”

Lee claims that play is the “emancipation of the soul, the giving it the freedom of the realms of space and the realms that are beyond space and beyond time” (188). Not only does play provide “the joy and the expansion of our life” but, as Lee insists, it also does not have to be “something useful” nor should it be relegated to “something of secondary importance” (188). In this article, Lee asserts that play should exist as an expression of pure pleasure for children and should not be asked to serve any other purposes. But Lee complicates this view of play in his second article “Feeding the Spirit of Childhood.” He begins his discussion of play in this article by asserting that playgrounds are a necessary addition to all schools because “play is life” to the child (598). However, Lee also notes that “these playgrounds ought to be conducted by trained leaders who know what children want and what they need,” before criticizing the “foolish notion that a leader destroys the child’s initiative” and implying that play with a developmental purpose, is no more or less valuable than children’s free, natural play (598). He ends his discussion of play with the following statement:

There are two sources of every act: the expression of the spirit, personality, on the one hand, and considerations of the practical possibilities upon the other... Life is the meeting of these elements. It is in their right cultivation that all true education must consist. (601)

With this final statement, Lee is attempting to find a balance in his two considerations of play. Returning to the argument Lee makes in the second article can help reveal how he establishes this balance. Lee claims that playground leaders can guide children’s play but still not ruin their initiative. So, while adults may guide children toward particular activities, children won’t be aware of the fact that their play is being molded to achieve

particular educational ends. Once again, children can play in innocent freedom while adults help them develop. By making children ignorant of the practicality of their spontaneous play, Lee is able to claim that play can, and in fact does, achieve two purposes at the same time; play can be an expression of childish imagination and a practical means of teaching children lessons they will need to succeed in the future.

The rhetorical strategies used in these articles show how these contributors resolved their anxiety about using play as an educational tool. By insisting that children would be ignorant of the educational potential within their imaginative games, they could maintain a separation between the child's view of play's purpose and the adult's awareness of play's practical capacities. But the need to create this separation didn't arise out of nowhere; instead, it is closely connected to one of the central missions of the PAA—the need to provide all children of all classes with safe space to play. The members of the PAA believed that the modern condition was making it impossible for children, especially lower-class city children, to have places of their own in which to play. This was a problem because the members of the PAA, like other middle-class reformers during this time, wanted to provide a protected childhood, defined primarily by play rather than by work, for all children. The introduction to Volume Two of *The Playground* clearly states the problems modern society creates for children and for those promoting play:

The development of the city, and the present industrial system, have inevitably changed conditions, and in the present organization of society, the play spirit is not universal nor does it promise to be eternal. Unless provision is made in its earliest days by those who foresee the needs of future generations, and a plan of growth

predestined, a city does not automatically develop recreation spots and open places for play. (1)

The members of the PAA argued that if these play spaces are not provided, then children would inevitably suffer. Kate Douglas Wiggin's 1908 address at a banquet in honor of Mrs. Humphrey Ward paints a rather dire picture of the lives of lower-class, city children without these play spaces. She states that in the cities "the grassy places have grown fewer and fewer" and that "the only 'grassy place' some of the more unfortunate children ever have access to... is the burying ground where at last their dull minds undeveloped souls and tired bodies find rest" (29). Without play spaces, Wiggin argues, children do not develop properly and, thus, ultimately, end up in "reform-schools, prisons, poor-houses, and hospitals" (29). Therefore, Wiggin claims that these children must be provided both time and space to engage in imaginative play in order to develop into proper citizens (30).

But while these contributors and others insisted that lower-class children had a right to play spaces, they could not be sure that these children would play correctly or would avoid being corrupted by other influences in their neighborhoods. Thus, although these children did deserve the space and time for play, these educators believed that they also needed to have their play managed and guided to ensure that they were absorbing the proper lessons. Elizabeth Rafter's 1908 article identifies the necessity of proper supervision in the play of city children. She begins her article with the statement that "so much has been spent and is being spent to reform the child... that it seems almost incredible that more has not been said and sung of preventing the child from becoming a

delinquent” (10). Her solution is to provide children with playgrounds since, by her estimation, many of the law-breaking acts committed by juvenile offenders are committed in the spirit of play. However, these playgrounds must be “so managed that the child is perfectly free to give vent to his animal spirits and still be under supervision and direction” (10). In other words, the child’s play should be guided by a playground director or teacher to ensure that mental, moral, and social development could occur but should still allow for the child’s spontaneous expression. In his 1921 assessment of the dangers urban life holds for young women, John Ayres argues that if girls are not provided with alternative diversions then they will turn to “the low dance hall and cheap places of amusement, where the influences are such as tend to make still lower her already low standard of life” (708). The solution to this problem lies in the establishment of the community center “where under wholesome oversight and supervision, the girl may be provided with those diversions, amusements and privileges which the home should provide” (708).²⁸ Like Rafer, Ayres claims that free play can and should be guided so that lower-class children absorb the proper lessons. In his 1916 article, “Teaching Children to Play,” A.I. Decker claims that lower-class city children need to be taught to be play just as they are taught other subjects, or they will develop harmful behaviors. Thus, Decker claims that supervision—“when exercised through the spontaneous happy medium of play”—is necessary for “the citizenship of our country”

²⁸ This article also contains the very interesting suggestion of creating “mother’s clubs” to instruct women on their “duties as mothers and as the custodian of the futures of their daughters” (709). These clubs apparently would help women learn how to properly raise their daughters, since they were incapable of doing so themselves.

(30). For Decker, the guiding of the spontaneous play of working-class children becomes a means of developing them into productive citizens.

By guiding the natural play of working-class children, these educators could ensure that these children learned the value of work, the benefits of self-control and self-government, how to create proper social relations, and, ultimately, how to be good citizens. Troublesome boys were turned into “gentlemen” through play, and girls were prevented from turning to the streets and instead were able to focus their energies on creating positive relationships with others and becoming positive influences in their homes. Perhaps most importantly, all children learned to put their excess energy to good use, so rather than committing crimes, they could spend their time productively. On the playground, through their natural play, children were unconsciously learning how to be good, productive citizens. But these contributors claimed that play could be a means of helping all children from all classes become good citizens, so how was this goal different for lower-class than for middle-class children? Charles F. Garfield’s 1907 article “Playgrounds in the Light of Commercial Interests” helps provide an answer to this question. In this article, Garfield notes that “there must be a philosophy concerning the upbringing of a child of the city which, when followed, will develop him into the good citizen” (4). Garfield leaves no question as to what this good citizenship entails, since he claims that “the child should be helped when a child to play, so that when a man he may work as a man” rather than being jailed as an “unfortunate adult” (4). Not only does the playground help the child develop into a good worker but also “[improves] the material at

hand for the employer” which is important because “the ranks of commerce are yearly demanding a better type of worker” (6). It appears Garfield wants these children to develop into good economic subjects for very particular jobs—those in the industrial and manufacturing sectors.

Like the contributors to *Education* discussed in Chapter One, it seems that the educators writing for *The Playground* were not interested in using play to change or challenge class stratification. They did want all children to have the same access to play and playgrounds but not because this access would create an equal society. Instead, they understood that play could help these children develop proper values and become more content, more productive citizens in the future and be less likely to challenge class stratification. So, play became another means of ensuring class stability. The articles on industrial recreation and welfare work further elucidate the contributors’ lack of interest in class equality. While these articles may seem outside the parameters of this project as they are discussing adult recreation, the industrial work that is described in these articles is the likely future work of lower-class children and, therefore, is relevant to discussions of the vocations for which the playground is preparing them. In his article on industrial recreation, O.W. Douglas claims that industries in Akron provided recreational facilities for their workers independent of the city and then changed the shifts of the workmen so that they and their families could make use of these facilities (190). Allowing their workers time for leisure, in the end, improved the stability of the workforce as well as

their level of contentment (191).²⁹ Recreation, then, was a means of keeping workers content so that they could be more productive and would not become dissatisfied with their class status.³⁰

In making the argument that play could help prepare children for future work, these contributors were attempting to ensure that all children would have access to playgrounds and would be provided time to play. In other words, by making play practical and relating it directly to the work the child would do in the future, these contributors could guarantee that parents would see the value in play, and if parents could see the value in play, then they would be more likely to allow their children the time to engage in games and other play activities. Thus, ensuring that all children of all classes were offered the same opportunities to play involved making play into a preparatory entity. But while parents would see play as a means of preparing children for the future, the contributors claimed that these children would only see their play as a pure fun. In this formulation, it appears that everyone wins. Adults get to guide children's play and help them develop mentally, physically, morally, and socially, children get to engage in imaginative fun and games, and the members of the PAA accomplish their goal of providing play spaces for all children, regardless of class. However, this idyllic picture is

²⁹ This same sentiment is echoed in Edward T. Devine's "How Fundamental is the Play Movement" (1914) in which he claims that the way to create more efficient workers is to develop the worker as a whole human being and provide for his leisure (422). John H. Finley's 1915 article "The Wisdom of Leisure" also expresses the need to provide proper leisure to workers.

³⁰ On a related note, play was also considered to be a means of preventing the creation of anarchists who wanted to challenge democracy and live outside the established laws; so, play was a means of keeping many different types of people content and under control. See H Addington Bruce, "Play and Citizenship," *The Playground* 15 (1921-1922).

based on a tenuous concept. After all, there is no way to ensure that children will always be ignorant of the preparatory potential of play. Plus, the ignorance of children regarding the purpose of play didn't alter the fact that these contributors were advocating the presence of playgrounds and play to prepare children for very specific, classed economic futures and using play to maintain class stratification and class stability. This use of play as a preparatory entity placed these educators in a contradictory situation. Though they had a clear investment in retaining the innocence and purity of the space of childhood completely separate from the marketplace (especially since these spaces separate from capitalism were ostensibly becoming few and far between in modern society), the only way to maintain and justify the existence of this space was to make it a place of preparation for future work thereby introducing economic considerations into it. In order to ease their anxieties regarding the potential loss of this protected space, the contributors had to assume that children would be ignorant of the developmental and educational purposes of their play thereby maintaining the integrity of the protected space of childhood. By making this assumption, they could accomplish all of their goals: creating a protected play space for all children, using this space to prepare children for the future, and employing this space to maintain class stability.

PLAY, EDUCATION, AND LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

The contradictions found in the descriptions of play within *The Playground* also appear in Louisa May Alcott's *Jack and Jill* and *Little Men*, but before analyzing the contradictions in these texts, we need to explore two potential sources for Alcott's ideas

of play and its uses in education.³¹ Alcott's conception of play, as it appears in these texts, could have been influenced by the burgeoning kindergarten movement that began in the 1870s. Those involved in this movement insisted that play could be used to help the child develop morally and mentally. For example, Mary Mann and Elizabeth Peabody's *The Moral Culture of Infancy and Kindergarten Guide* (1870) argued that "the object-lessons involved in the plays are those which especially belong to the Kindergarten," and further claimed that this form of play was a primary means of training the mind and the morals of the child (1453).³² William Harris's 1871 superintendent's report for the St. Louis public schools argues for the necessity of a proper balance of play and work in the kindergarten and the classroom more generally. Harris claimed that "without work the child learns to know only his caprice, his arbitrary likes and dislikes, and he is training himself for a tyrant... without play he is learning to have no will of his own and no personal interest in anything" (1454). His 1880 report on kindergartens goes even further, noting that one of the objectives of the kindergarten was to "develop imagination by symbolic representation in children's games or plays, and self-activity by constant invention in all his exercises" (1457). It is difficult to know to what degree

³¹ I chose these particular texts specifically because they, in particular, provide a large number of scenes in which the children engage in all types and forms of play. In addition, these books, for the most part, lack a strong over-arching narrative so they are basically made up of these disconnected scenes of play. So, these books can provide the clearest picture of what Alcott could have thought about play and its uses in education.

³² This work could have especial relevance here as Bronson Alcott worked with Elizabeth Peabody, hiring her as his teaching assistant at Temple School. See John Matteson's "The Temple School," chapter 3 of *Eden's Outcasts* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

Alcott was influenced by these ideas, but at the very least, she, like these educators, did acknowledge that play could be used as an educational tool.

Her father's educational ideologies also may have affected Alcott's use of play in these books.³³ According to Gregory Eiselein, Bronson Alcott promoted practical, concrete, hands-on learning, believing that "training for living is the proper aim of education" (20). In addition, Alcott claimed that education was not about acquiring facts but about developing "a reflective, useful state of mind" and establishing self-control (Matteson 58). Alcott even identified play as a vital means of educating the child. As he stated, "all need... the influence of sunshine, exercise out of doors, and a chosen task. Play is wholesome. A sound mind proves itself best by keeping its body sound and swift to serve its terms; its senses keen, its limbs strong and agile for the moment" (64). Thus, Bronson Alcott advocated a practical and useful education that prepared the child for the future and believed play could be used as a means of keeping the body healthy and the mind able. Again, it is difficult to know how much Bronson's ideologies influenced Alcott, but, in these books, she, too, showed play to be a practical and useful means of educating children.

These educators who could have influenced the images of play Alcott's texts all appear more invested in using play to teach and develop children rather than allowing

³³ It has been well documented that the school in *Little Men* was heavily influenced by Bronson Alcott's Temple School. Gregory Eiselein's article explores the contradictions and paradoxes that are rampant in Plumfield and, further, argues that these contradictions are "indicative of Alcott's larger views about socialization, education, and morality," views that ultimately are informed by the teachings of her father (7). In her article about the ways in which Alcott complicates and reworks the school story, Beverly Lyon Clark argues that because of Alcott's position as the daughter of an educational pioneer, she was well equipped to "dissect the values of the school story" (325).

play to exist as a pure, free, imaginative entity. So, it would seem that, unlike the contributors to *The Playground*, Alcott shouldn't be anxious about using play to prepare the child for the future. However, in her texts it is quite clear that play is not only being used to teach children. Undeniably, these texts contain a number of scenes in which adults use play to teach lessons, but they also contain scenes in which children engage in free, imaginative play away from adult intervention. So, like the contributors to *The Playground*, Alcott is also trying to find a balance between play's two purposes, and she accomplishes this goal by assuming that her fictional children are not aware of the developmental potential in their games or how adults are shaping their play to meet particular educational ends. In doing so, she provides her fictional children with a protected childhood that is marked by play rather than preparation for the future.

Often the adults in Alcott's novels engage in conversations out of the hearing of the children in which they discuss the ways in which they can shape and guide the children's play to meet particular ends. In Chapter Fifteen of *Little Men*, Jo observes Nan's free play and finds that she has a penchant for taking care of the other children's hurts. After discovering that Nan "was never happier than when the little boys brought their cut fingers, bumped heads, and bruised joints for her to 'mend up,'" Jo suggests that Nan learn how to doctor properly by taking lessons in "bandaging, plastering, and fomenting" from the school nurse (262). Eventually, Nan's natural inclination and talent for healing leads Jo to discuss Nan's future education (and future play) with Professor Bhaer. Jo claims that they should not "snub her restless little nature, but do our best to

give her the work she likes” so that in the future she can be “a capital doctor” (263). Accordingly, Professor Bhaer teaches Nan about herbs and their healing properties and lets Nan, in her play, apply the knowledge she’s gained by treating the other children’s “little illnesses” (264). By observing Nan’s free play, the Bhaers discover her natural talents and create a curriculum that will allow her to hone her skills so that one day she can study medicine and become a real doctor. More importantly, Alcott makes it clear that the Bhaers have managed Nan’s play without her ever being the wiser. When Nan finally declares that she wishes to “have an office, with lots of bottles and drawers and pestle things in it, and... drive round in a horse and chaise and cure sick people,” she does so “with decision,” implying that she has come to this resolution independently (264). In other words, Nan hasn’t decided to become a doctor because that is what the Bhaers are preparing her for. She had decided to be a doctor because she believes it would be “such fun,” very much like her current play (264). In this scenario, Nan engages in her fun games without knowing that the Bhaers are using these games to help her develop skills she can use in the future. This same pattern occurs with the other students. When Jo uncovers Daisy’s desire to learn how to cook, she discusses the possibility of creating a play kitchen for Daisy at Plumfield with Daisy’s mother, Meg, and ends up financing this venture with the help of Laurie (76). Once the play kitchen is created, Jo uses this space to teach Daisy how to prepare meals for a family thereby preparing her for her future vocation. But Daisy is unaware that this play kitchen is actually helping her develop practical skills; for her, it is only a “splendid new play”

(81). By keeping her fictional children ignorant of the preparatory uses of their play, Alcott allows each of them to have a protected childhood, unmarred by economic or societal concerns.³⁴

In the previously discussed scenes, it is clear how Alcott establishes a separation between the children's imaginative games and the adults' management of play. However, there are a number of scenes of unsupervised play in both *Little Men* and *Jack and Jill* in which adults do not appear at all, and in these scenes it appears that play only exists as a medium through which children can have imaginative fun. Chapter Eight of *Little Men* includes a number of scenes depicting children's unsupervised play. The children engage in a game called "Brops" which involves "flapping or creeping about the nursery, acting like little bedlamites and being as merry as little grigs," though this play often devolves into quarrelling, name calling, crying, scolding, and pouting" (139). The boys also engaged in games of cricket and football, while "the little girls indulged the usual plays of their age, improving upon them somewhat as their lively fancies suggested" (143). While Alcott doesn't spend much time describing the boys' games, the girls' imaginative play is described in detail:

No pen can describe the adventures of these ladies, for in one short afternoon their family was the scene of births, marriages, deaths, floods, earthquakes, tea-parties, and balloon ascensions. Millions of miles did these energetic women travel... driving the posts like mettlesome steeds, and bouncing up and down till their heads spun. Fits and fires were the pet afflictions, with a general massacre now and then by way of change. Nan was never tired of inventing fresh combinations. (144)

³⁴ Interesting enough, this use of play in *Little Men* parallels the use of play described in Nagley's article. The Bhaers work to make play into work and work into play so that the children will develop the practical and useful skills they will need to succeed in the future.

The boys and girls even created clubs. The boys' club had "peculiar" proceedings "for it met at all sorts of places and hours, had all manner of queer ceremonies and amusements, and now and then was broken up tempestuously, only to be re-established" (144). The girls' club had "little suppers, new games devised by Nan, and other pleasing festivities" (145).

This establishment of clubs is also an activity in which of the children in *Jack and Jill* find a great deal of pleasure. Alcott states that "in summer, the boys devoted themselves to base-ball, the girls to boating, and all got rosy, stout, and strong, in these healthful exercises. In winter, the lads had their debating club, the lasses a dramatic ditto" (46). Notably, these clubs are run and attended only by the children—Jill is the chairwoman of the girls' club and Frank, Jack's brother, is the chairman of the boys' club—so the children alone decide which pursuits to undertake. The girls' dramatic club, in particular, was quite ambitious as "everything was boldly attempted, from Romeo and Juliet to Mother Goose's immortal melodies" (46). When we finally see a meeting of these clubs, the girls are attempting to decide who will be the leading lady in their latest production, *Sleeping Beauty*, while the boys are deciding whether or not to induct one of the town's former "bad boys," Bob Walker, into their club. Ultimately, the girls decide to make Jill their Beauty while the boys decide to include Bob and, having settled this matter, begin a debate on the merits of co-education. I mention these choices only because it seems that in these moments the children are not in any way guided or controlled in their decision-making; they themselves decide to make and enforce certain

choices in their play. This same statement could be said of all of the scenes of free play described *Little Men*. These boys and girls also decide the activities they want to undertake in their clubs. Nan makes up games of her own volition, and Daisy follows her lead even when these games turn out to be slightly dangerous. The children choose to engage in the game of “Brops,” despite the fact that this game usually causes a great deal of bickering rather than a great deal of fun. But while it may seem otherwise, the play of these children is actually serving an educational purpose—though, once again, the children are not aware of it.

While a fictional adult may not always be present to oversee and manage the children’s choices in play, one adult is still always present: the adult narrator. This narrator interprets the children’s play for the reader, often saying explicitly what the child has learned, thereby revealing the lessons the children have learned through their free play and showing that this play is indeed serving a practical purpose. Further, because this adult narrator has no direct communication with the fictional children, these children can remain unaware of the mental, moral, physical, and social development they are receiving through their games. In the dramatic club meeting in *Jack and Jill*, we are informed that the girls are all vying to be Beauty; so, obviously, when Jill decides that Merry will take this role, all the other girls pout and complain. But they are redeemed when they put the needs of Jill before their own. The narrator praises their behavior, noting that this “fairy play woke the sleeping beauty that lies in all of us and makes us lovely when we rouse it with a kiss of unselfish good-will” (131-32). In this moment, the

narrator shows how this free play helped the girls develop good social skills and learn how to act in a community; the narrator tells the reader the developmental purposes this play has served while the girls are unaware that they have learned anything at all. The narrator also praises the behavior of the boys in the debating club when they decide to allow Bob Walker to become a member of their group. The narrator states that “it was only boys’ play now, but the kind heart and pure instincts of one lad showed the others how to lend a helping hand to a comrade in danger, and win him away from temptation” (112). Once again, the narrator shows that these boys have learned what it means to be good community members; however, they are equally unaware that their free play was serving a broader educational purpose. The narrator in *Little Men* also defines the lessons that are learned from free play. For example, we are told that the only reason the girls actually created a club in the first place was because the boys were not willing to allow them to participate in their meetings. But once the boys realized that the girls’ club was worthy of their attention, then there was an “interchange of civilities” (145). The girls were “invited to adorn the rival establishment on certain evenings” and their presence was “not found to be a restraint upon the conversation of the regular frequenters” (145). In turn, the boys were treated very hospitably by the girls when invited to their club. Though the lesson here is less overtly stated, it is, once again, apparent that the boys and girls learn a clear lesson about how to treat the opposite sex and how to behave in a civilized community. It is also apparent that these children are ignorant of the other purposes being applied to their imaginative games. By using the narrator to define the

developmental purposes behind the children's games, Alcott again manages to preserve the protected space of childhood.

But while the children within Alcott's texts can be rendered ignorant of the purposes of their play, it seems that the same cannot hold true for the child reader. The same narrator who keeps the fictional children ignorant of the purposes of their games highlights the lesson that the child reader should be learning. Were these books only serving a pedagogical purpose, this function of the adult narrator would not be considered problematic or contradictory. However, the presence of the adult narrator becomes significantly more complicated if we imagine the activity of reading these books as a form of play for the child. Before going any further into this discussion of child readers it is worth mentioning how and why reading can and should be considered a play activity for late 19th century children. In his article "Children's Play in American Autobiographies, 1820-1914," Bernard Mergen notes that a number of autobiographers mentioned the important role books and reading had in their formative years and, therefore, claims that "the voluntary nature of reading and the liberating effect it had on children indicate that it should be included in any inventory of children's playfulness" (183). Anne Scott MacLeod's study of 19th century reading patterns further supports this claim that reading was a form of play and leisure. MacLeod claims that "families read together much as families today might watch television and for the same reason: reading was then... by far the most available form of entertainment for most Americans" (114). From these studies, it can be inferred that children weren't just reading books to be

educated but were rather reading them for their own enjoyment. However, it would appear that, for children, reading as a form of enjoyment could not be entirely about imaginative fun because the child would seemingly know that they were obtaining important lessons about social and moral behavior from the stories they were reading since these lessons were often clearly laid out for them.

Still, it is difficult to ascertain how aware children were of the lessons they were learning from these books. In her essay, MacLeod describes Helen Woodward's childhood reading experience; as a child, Woodward loved the books of Louisa May Alcott but as an adult "deplored Alcott's considerable influence on her" (117). From Woodward's comments, it appears that she only became aware of the moral lessons she absorbed from Alcott's books later in life. While Woodward was still a child, these books served only as a means of escape and pleasure rather than as a form of education. Other individuals cited in this essay, like Edna Ferber, H.L. Mencken, and Una Hunt, also described how they "escaped" into novels by Stevenson, Cooper, Alcott, and others. They also noted how they deplored books that were too didactic and would often refuse to read them. Ultimately, MacLeod's study shows that, as children, these individuals wanted books that were fun and that allowed for them to experience adventures vicariously; therefore, they disregarded books that were overtly attempting to teach moral lessons. But it seems that if a book had a compelling story, any lesson that was found within the book could be overlooked—at least until one reached adulthood. While it would difficult to state that all child readers generally (and readers of Alcott specifically)

were unaware of the lessons they were learning in their books, it is entirely possible to claim that at least some of these readers, just like Alcott's fictional children, could have remained ignorant of the educational lessons that were being imparted through their reading, thereby allowing this play activity to remain innocent fun. So, in the end, the presence of the adult narrator for the child readers is actually less problematic than it initially seems. Though this narrator does clearly define the actions of the child characters, it is arguable that the readers are not always cued into what the narrator is actually teaching.

Little Men and *Jack and Jill* contain the same anxiety found in the articles from *The Playground* regarding the justification of the use of play as an educational tool; thus, Alcott also worked to create a separation between play's two purposes. Her fictional children could have their fun and not be aware that they were also learning important and practical lessons, and because her stories were compelling, her actual child readers could potentially remain ignorant of the moral and social lessons they were absorbing through her texts. Still, there was, of course, a reason for this anxiety, and, like the contributors to *The Playground*, this reason is connected to issues of class. Alcott does appear to have some investment in providing all the children in these two books with protected childhoods, though it is difficult to say that, like those writing in *The Playground*, she is using the practical lessons provided through play to argue that all children should have access to a protected childhood. What is apparent is that all of the children in these books are offered the same opportunities for play and recreation, regardless of their class status.

For example, in *Jack and Jill*, Jill is marked as lower-class, as her mother is described as a woman who “earned her bread by sewing, nursing, work in the factory or anything that came in her way” (14). But Jill is never excluded from the play of the other children. In every scene of play throughout the text, Jill is not only present but often is leading the games she and her friends play. Even the characters who must also work to support themselves are afforded some aspect of the protected childhood. Bob Walker, who does chores at a farm to earn his keep, is still a member of the boys’ debating club and is present in the final scene of play depicted in the text. Occasionally, the lower-class characters are even saved from economic hardship and provided protected childhoods by the adults in these texts. In *Little Men*, Nat comes to Plumfield for shelter because he is an orphaned “street musician” and had been living in a cellar (19). Jo decides to take him in because he “was a lonely, sick boy, who needed just what she loved to give, a home, and motherly care” (20). In other words, Jo is providing him with a protected childhood in which he will be able to play rather than having to work.

In addition, Alcott, to some degree, is also invested in class stability, and her means of creating class stability in these texts is to ensure that all children—especially those of the lower class—learn the same values through their play. It is often implied in these texts that the free play of the lower-class characters must be guided; otherwise, they will end up becoming criminals and malcontents. However, it is not just the adults who guide these children’s play. Instead, the children step in to police and manage the play of their lower-class companions, thereby enforcing middle-class values. In *Jack and Jill*,

Bob Walker is described as “good-hearted enough” but because no one cares to look out for him he “loafs round the tavern and goes with fellows [the boys] don’t care to know” (111). To prevent him from “getting into scrapes,” the boys, as previously mentioned, permit him membership to their club and also agree to stand by him “out of the club as well as in” (111-12). By joining this club, Bob has opportunity to engage in wholesome play, experience the fellowship of well-behaved young people, and have the guidance of the adults who sanction this club. Due to the influence of these individuals (and of his middle-class employer), Bob learns to be honest, kind, and forthright, and to stay out of the company of those who would cause him to go astray (186-87). By the end of the text, Bob has earned the favor of the children in the town by making himself “generally useful” on their outings (327). Because he is so well supervised, Bob cannot help but learn middle-class values from the play he engages in. His final description as “useful” signifies that he is ready to become a productive member of the community having absorbed the proper values from play.

Dan’s journey in *Little Men* is a slightly more complicated since he is a more central character to this particular novel. When he first arrives at Plumfield, he brings with him a number of vices like dishonesty—on his first day he tries to steal a knife from another student—ingratitude, and a wild temper. He is allowed to stay in the school because Jo and Professor Bhaer hope that some of the other students will exert a good influence over him through their play. However, Dan ends up corrupting the other children through his play. He engages the boys in fighting, convinces them to torment

some poor cows, and involves them in drinking, gambling, and smoking, nearly burning the house down in the process. Due to this inappropriate behavior, Professor Bhaer sends Dan away to stay with a farmer, but Dan ends up running away from this residence. When Dan returns to Plumfield, he is injured in body but calmer in spirit. At this juncture, his play is much more productive because it is more closely supervised by adults. During his time away from school Dan turned into something of a naturalist and found enjoyment and fun collecting specimens. Jo encourages him in this play by providing him books to read, time in which to read them, and space to keep his specimens. However because Dan has been so untrustworthy in the past, Jo knows she must closely guide his play. Thus, she tells Dan that he will have the opportunity to spend time on his hobby as a reward for good behavior. If Dan can “try to do [his] lessons and [his] work, play kindly with all the boys, and use [his] holidays well” he will be rewarded (177). A scene late in the book where Dan breaks a horse follows this same pattern. The play is initially allowed by Laurie (who permits Dan to spend time with the horse), closely watched by the groundskeeper Silas, and eventually authorized by Professor Bhaer. However, once again, it is Jo who explains to Dan the importance and significance of this play. After Dan has tamed the colt, Jo tells him that she is “taming a colt too, and I think that I shall succeed as well as you if I am as patient and persevering” (294). Jo tells Dan that the enjoyment he had breaking the horse provided a means of his own development, making him calmer, tamer, and more gentlemanly. By explaining the educational purposes behind Dan’s games, Jo bridges the separation between the child’s

view of play and the adult's understanding of play, thereby ruining the possibility of Dan engaging in play that is nothing more than pure, imaginative fun. However, because Dan is such a dangerous influence, he must be watched closely; otherwise, he will fail to conform to middle-class values and likely corrupt others in the process. By closely supervising Dan's play, the Bhaers are able to accomplish their ultimate goal: helping Dan develop the skills he will need to be a productive and positive force in his community.³⁵

Still, Dan's close supervision points to a central contradiction in Alcott's use of play in these texts. It seems that maintaining the separation between play's two purposes is only really viable for middle-class children. Lower-class children, in Alcott's texts, are configured as dangerous, too dangerous to engage free play, too dangerous to even have their play remotely guided by adults. These children need to have the overt presence of adults (and, occasionally, other children who have already absorbed middle-class values) in their play in order to guarantee that they will behave properly and learn the right lessons. Without this supervision, these children will fail to develop morally, mentally, physically, or socially, will end up as criminals, and may end up even leading other children down the wrong path. Thus, to ensure the stability of these fictional communities, the play of lower-class children must always be closely watched.

³⁵ Unfortunately, Dan ends up becoming a cautionary tale once we extend his story into *Jo's Boys*. Dan's inability to tame his temper—which signals his failure to fully grasp middle-class values—ultimately causes him to murder another man, though this act is notably done in defense of another younger boy. He ends up serving a year in prison. This prison sentence, as well as the crime itself, make him unfit to marry the woman he loves and fully enter the middle-class. However, it is unclear whether or not the lack of proper company actually caused this lapse, so while the end of Dan's story is worth mentioning, it is slightly outside of the parameters of this discussion.

However, this supervision does not preclude the possibility of a protected childhood. Both Dan and Bob are allowed to engage in play and attend school, and neither of them is forced to work long hours. But these boys must earn their right to play and to a protected childhood by submitting to the lessons in proper moral and social behavior given to them by adults and occasionally by other children. It seems that if a lower-class character wants to be provided time to play, he must first absorb middle-class values thereby ensuring that he will fit into and will not upset the current social order.

CONCLUSION

Louisa May Alcott and the contributors to *The Playground* claimed that play could be used to achieve two goals simultaneously. First, they argued that play could and should be viewed as a medium for children's imaginative fun and games. Second, they argued that play's practical purpose could ensure that children were learning lessons that could help them develop mentally, morally, socially, and physically. However, arguing that play could accomplish these two goals at the same time created some anxiety in these authors; they believed that by using play as a means of developing and teaching children they would corrupt the innocence and purity of childhood. In order to resolve this anxiety, they had to claim that children would never be aware of the educational and developmental potential of their play. These authors insisted on this separation between play's two purposes in order to allow all children of all classes to have access to a protected childhood. Without this separation, economic and other adult considerations

would enter into the separate place of childhood and contaminate the ideal of the protected childhood.

However, there were inherent contradictions in the creation of this protected space of childhood which made the very idea of the protected childhood somewhat unstable. For one, it would be difficult to ensure in practice that children were always unaware of the lessons they were being taught. In fact, it seems likely that children would know and understand that their play was being guided by adults in order to meet some educational purpose. Thus, assuming naiveté on the part of children was not really an effective means of creating a protected childhood space. Further, while these educators did want all children to have access to the same protected childhood, this very egalitarian goal was not to ensure future class equality but to ensure class stability by guaranteeing that all individuals learned and, subsequently, shared the same values and guaranteeing that all individuals will be content in their work. In Alcott's books, this need to achieve class stability involves informing the lower-class characters of the purpose of their play and making it understood that the protected childhood they are being offered does not come for free; it must be earned with proper behavior. By introducing the idea that that childhood must be earned, the concept of the unadulterated space of childhood becomes destabilized. Childhood itself becomes a commodity, one that children must work to obtain. Thus, economic considerations enter into the supposedly protected space of childhood.

While in this chapter this idea that childhood must be earned is contained to one particular class of people in one particular author's books, in the following chapter, I will show how this idea of the earned childhood had a broader base and a broader impact. Ultimately, this final chapter will show that the entrance of economic considerations into the protected space of childhood is almost an inevitable conclusion given the way in which these educators and authors constructed this space. By making the trappings of childhood—school and play—practical and using this practical education to simultaneously protect the child in the present and prepare the child for the future, there was no way to avoid the implication that the child must somehow earn the right to protection by submitting to a practical education. Consequently, the ideal childhood—supposedly separate from all adult concerns—that these authors constructed was never really viable.

CHAPTER THREE—A Protected Childhood?: Domestic Education and Girls' Books

INTRODUCTION

In the second decade of the 20th century, American public schools began to introduce vocational education into the curriculum, and like those promoting humanities and play, they claimed that this form of education was not only practical but could also develop children into productive citizens. In her 1913 article in *Education*, Edith Tuttle, claims that vocational education has the capacity to provide girls with a number of useful skills that they can use in a variety of jobs. She argues “no girl can learn to write a page on the typewriter or to make a loaf of bread, or a braid hat, or a shirt waist, without getting training in accuracy, concentrated attention, and the co-ordination of mind and hand” (448). In her argument advocating vocational education, Tuttle very broadly uses the same rationale as those supporting the humanities, claiming that a vocational education can provide useful and practical skills that can help one succeed in the workforce. However, Tuttle goes on to offer another explanation as to why vocational education should be considered practical: it can prevent children from leaving school too early and entering into the workforce. She claims that “the girls and their parents are willing to make sacrifices for the sake of one or two or even three years of education that will fit a girl to earn her living” (450). In Tuttle’s estimation, vocational education is worthwhile not only because it prepares girls for future jobs but also because vocational education makes it possible for these girls to stay in school longer.

The reasoning Tuttle provides for supporting vocational education matches the contemporary concerns middle class parents had about their non-productive children and the concerns middle-class reformers had about lower class children and child labor. By the late 19th century, middle-class parents began to see their children as too valuable to be used as workers, and, as Viviana Zelizer argues, once these children were no longer working in traditional jobs, then “concern shifted to children’s education as the determinant of future marketplace worth” (5). Middle class parents wanted and needed their children to have a proper education in order to ensure that they could be economically productive adults, but these parents also needed a space in which their children could learn a proper work ethic since they were no longer working outside the home. The practical education obtained through vocational classes, to some degree, helped alleviate the fear that the new generation of unproductive children would grow up to be lazy and unmotivated adults, unable to contribute to the betterment of the American economy. More importantly, however, like those educators discussing the potential educational benefits of play discussed in the previous chapter, those promoting vocational education believed that this type of education could help provide all children with a protected childhood. These educators believed that the practical lessons found in vocational courses made education attractive to lower class children and their parents; consequently, these parents would be more inclined to send their boys and girls to school rather than into the workforce, thereby prolonging the childhood of lower class children. But by insisting that the school be used to prepare the child for future work and protect

her from the workforce in the present, these parents and educators turned the school, like the playground, into a contradictory place that was attempting to accomplish two goals simultaneously: protecting children from societal and economic concerns in the present and preparing them for a productive future as working adults.

The conversations about girls' vocational education found in the journal *Education* display this tension between the desire to use the school as a space free of economic concerns and the need to use it as an entity that can prepare girls for their future vocations whether inside or outside the home. So while those promoting vocational courses felt the increasing need to make education more industrial minded in order to ensure its relevance—and to provide girls some incentive to remain in school—they also had some anxiety about using the public high schools to prepare girls for specialized trades.³⁶ This tension regarding protection and preparation is not confined solely to this educational discourse. It also occurs in girls' books published in the first two decades of the 20th century. In Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903), L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), and Elnora Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913), the young female protagonists earn the right to be imaginative, playful children by showing an aptitude for and a willingness to help with the work in the home. While each girl's respective primary caregiver does eventually develop a desire to protect

³⁶ For example, in his article in *Education*, Louis Marvel claims, the real purpose of manual education was to inculcate a respect for labor and hard work into all the students and to train their bodies along with their minds, "to train all alike in a few manual operations common to all the trades" (597). However, as Herbert Kliebard argues in *Schooled to Work*, a commission appointed by the governor of Massachusetts in 1905 found that "schools were out of tune with the times. As the report saw it, the public school system was simply inadequate in terms of 'modern industrial and social conditions,' clinging instead to an outmoded humanistic tradition. The remedy was to move in the direction of industrial trade training" (34).

her young charge, this appreciation only arrives after the girl has been inculcated into a regimen of practical domestic education.

The criticism of these girls' books has traditionally focused on whether or not the books should be read as liberatory or disappointing, and perhaps potentially damaging, for their young female audiences. Temma Berg, for example, sees *Anne of Green Gables* as containing a "revolutionary feminism which has empowered generations of young girls" despite its ending (128).³⁷ Others critics, like Anne Scott MacLeod, read these books as disappointing, arguing that these turn-of-the-century girls' books reflect the realities of a society that valued dependent and submissive women.³⁸ Recent scholarship has begun to complicate this binary. In her discussion of the *Anne of Green Gables* series, Marah Gubar explores the importance of same-sex relationships throughout these books, ultimately claiming that "although marriage inevitably caps the halting progress of Montgomery's heroines, it stands revealed as a desultory move, a tacked-on storybook convention that cannot adequately conclude the life stories of these singular characters many of whom are repeatedly described as 'queer'" (64).³⁹ Janet Weiss-Townsend and

³⁷ K.L. Poe can also be added to this camp. In her article "The Whole of the Moon: L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* Series," she argues that Montgomery's series actually shows girls the positives of domestic life and of female communities, claiming that Anne "sees her role as unlimited in spite of the conventions that bind her" (16).

³⁸ Gillian Thomas, Eve Kornfeld, and Susan Jackson also see the books as limiting. Thomas argues that the failings of the *Anne* series stem from "the social limitations on Anne Blythe who must behave appropriately for her role as 'Mrs. Dr.'" (28). Kornfeld and Jackson claim that while the writers of girls' books were able to give "their heroines the freedom of development they would not have found in the male world," their protagonists were "precluded from entering this male world fully and finally" (151).

³⁹ Other critics like Julia McQuillan, Julie Pfeiffer, and Emily Cardinali Cormier also have complicated the neat gender binaries that these texts seem to establish, showing that *Anne of Green Gables* both complicates

Perry Nodelman further complicate the reading of these books by arguing that Montgomery, Wiggin, and Porter—along with other authors—actually prevent their girls from growing up, allowing them to maintain their girlish innocence, thereby avoiding the limitations that come with marriage.

Thus, unsurprisingly, gender has been the primary lens through which these texts have been read. This reading will also focus on gender for three reasons. First, the work the girls engage in to earn their protected childhoods is primarily domestic in nature, and their formal education leads them to what had been termed the “feminized occupations”—positions as teachers, writers, and social workers. Second, the way in which these books resolve the tension between protection and preparation is gendered, an issue that will be discussed later in the chapter. Finally, these girls’ books open up the possibility of a new form of middle-class womanhood, one not defined only by seriousness and work but also by the possibility of inventiveness and play. Whether or not this new form of womanhood is positive, however, is debatable. By making womanhood more like childhood, these authors could be infantilizing their protagonists, showing that, in their very nature, childhood and womanhood are not all that different. However, given the frustration these authors felt at the limitations of their genre, it is decidedly more likely that Wiggin, Montgomery, and Porter let their girls choose a new

and reinforces gender structures in varying ways. Further, in writing about *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Regina Puleo notes that Rebecca’s future is hardly sown up at the end of the text; instead, she argues that Wiggin creates an open ending that leaves Rebecca able to embark on any number of possible futures.

form of womanhood, one that would make their almost inevitable futures in the domestic sphere more tolerable.⁴⁰

This chapter will begin by exploring the early 20th century discussions surrounding girls' vocational and manual education by examining articles from the journal *Education*. Through this reading, I will show how these educators used vocational courses in an attempt to simultaneously prepare girls for their future and protect them in the present. Then, I will connect this discussion of vocational education to 20th century girls' books, notably *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Pollyanna*, to reveal that what initially appear to be localized concerns limited only to discussions of girls' education are actually present in other spheres, thereby showing that the anxieties plaguing educators were only part of a larger discussion about girlhood in the 20th century. In these books, *Pollyanna*, *Rebecca*, and *Anne* all receive a practical, domestic education in their homes which performs largely the same function as vocational education: it prepares the girls for future work while simultaneously keeping them out of the workforce. By comparing these texts to the educational discourse found in *Education*, I will show that these educators and authors believed that children needed to earn their right to a protected childhood by submitting to practical lessons that would help them succeed in the workforce. I will also argue that by

⁴⁰ According to Regina Puleo, the reviews Wiggin received for the sequel to *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* showed discontent with Wiggin's failure to marry off Rebecca to Adam Ladd, her perceived love interest. In addition, Marah Gubar notes L.M. Montgomery married Anne off "as a result of increasing pressure from readers than out of her own wishes for her heroine" (58). In her article, "Dragged at Anne's Chariot Wheels: L.M. Montgomery and the Sequels to *Anne of Green Gables*," Carole Gerson also notes that Montgomery did not want to marry Anne off. Gerson cites the expectations of Montgomery's readers and her publisher as the reason behind Anne's ultimate matrimony.

insisting that these girls earn the right to a childhood, middle-class educators and authors were able to resolve the binary between the desire to protect the girl in the present and prepare her for the future. But while the preparation a vocational education provided allowed for the existence of a protected childhood, it was only at the expense of allowing economic considerations into childhood. I will end this chapter with a discussion of how these educators defined a practical education and show how vocational courses, formal education, and a protected childhood work together to create a different type of womanhood, not only defined by work but open to the possibility of play. Ultimately, however, I will reveal that this new form of womanhood is open only to middle-class girls who have the opportunity to receive both a humanities and a vocational education.

TIME TO PLAY OR TIME TO LEARN?

While studies of turn of the century vocational education have tended to focus on its class dimensions and on its cultural and civic advantages, gender has been a lesser concern in part because girls were the secondary focus for advocates of industrial and manual education.⁴¹

Herbert Kliebard describes this conflict in the following way:

One the one hand, it was clear that women were entering the industrial workforce in great numbers, and this implied trade training for women as well as men... On

⁴¹ For more on the class and civic dimensions of vocational education see Herbert M. Kliebard, "Fitting Youth 'For Their Life-Work': From Manual Training to Vocational Training, 1895-1912," chapter two from *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), Ileen Devault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir, "The Eclipse of Democratic Schooling," chapter four from *Schooling for All*, and Walter Licht, "Schools and Work," chapter three from *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992).

the other hand, the feeling persisted that job training for women was inconsistent with women's traditional roles, and this implied teaching domestic skills rather than industrial education. (41)

However, he also notes that this conflict regarding the ultimate purpose of girls' vocational education allowed educators to manipulate these vocational education courses to meet multiple ends.⁴² Therefore, educators could use these classes to train girls for potential future vocations outside the home—like clerical and factory work—while also teaching girls the skills needed to keep their own homes in the future. Jane Powers argues that the multiple purposes of girls' vocational education meant that this education in its most common form, home economics, could encompass “both traditional and feminist values” (22). Powers goes on to explain that while some believed that home economics limited girls by forcing them back into the home others believed that it “represented an optimistic vision of women's potential—that of municipal housekeepers empowered to effect change in the world” (23). These critics and others⁴³ have identified the manifold various purposes for girls' vocational education, but they have not explored

⁴² Boys' education, on the other hand, was typically focused on creating good citizens who could choose proper jobs that would benefit themselves and the republic. Thus, the need for uplift and social reform were mostly absent from discussions of boys' vocational and technical training. There are multiple essays from *Education* that show this focus on citizenship and choice. For example, most of Calvin Woodward's writings on the subject are focused only on creating good citizens able to find their “true calling” (for representative examples, see “The Function of an American Manual Training School” from *Education* Vol. 3 and “Manual Training” from *Education* Vol. 4).

⁴³ See Barbara Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere: Woman and the Professions in American History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, “Differentiating the High School: The ‘Woman Question,’” chapter 8 from *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992), and Harvey A. Kantor, “From Manual to Vocational Training: The Origins of Vocational Education in California” and “Implementing Federal Vocational Education Legislation: The Impact of Smith Hughes,” chapters 3 and 6 from *School, Work, and Vocational Reform in California, 1880-1930* (Madison, Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

how educators used vocational education to simultaneously protect the girl's childhood and to prepare her for her future. Articles from the journal *Education* provide a means of exploring these anxieties surrounding girls' vocational education and the class issues that underlie these anxieties.

First, the contributors to this journal touted girls' vocational education as a means to create a good work ethic and a respect for labor in all young women—especially those of the middle class. For example, in her article “An Ideal Education of Girls” (1885), May Mackintosh argues that the proper education must include learning to respect and value labor, noting that “we should not train our children to despise honest labor or those who perform it” (649). Eventually, this need to teach a good work ethic merged with the desire to provide middle-class girls with what the contributors claimed was a truly practical education. For example, in her article “The Technical Education of Women” (1907), Julia Tutweiler argues that these girls need to be made productive to attend to their own desires to work and avoid being merely frivolous. She claims that most girls “desire to be producers; they would prefer to tell that they are not mere drones in the social hive, living upon the honey gathered by their more fortunate comrades, but useful and necessary members of the community, adding to its material and immaterial wealth” (201). She ends her article advocating for a change in girls' education relating the following anecdote:

An Englishman once said that the difference between the Scotch and English universities is that the Scotch universities teach a young man how to make a thousand pounds a year, and the English universities teach him how to spend that amount. This is pretty much the difference between girls' schools as they now

are, and girls' schools as they would be with these technical departments added. (207)

Other writers echo Tutweiler's concerns. In "The Education of Girls" (1893), A. Witte claims that "formerly ladies were taught next to nothing, they learned almost nothing" and insists that modern girls need a more modern education that develops useful skills (229). She argues that if a middle-class girl's education is not useful, she will end up being a burden not only to her husband and children but to the community as a whole should she choose not to marry: "The girl must also be taught that her life has an independent value, and that she can lead a useful life alone. Let your lessons train her for a single state as well as for that of wife and mother, that either call may find her ready" (232). Occasionally, this call for a useful education arose out of the belief that these girls may one day need to work out of economic necessity. Writing in 1913 about vocational education for girls, Edith Tuttle claimed that many "girls of moderate means... have the immediate need of earning money" since their families can only support them until they are 16 or 17. According to Tuttle, vocational education "ensures [the girls] a living in case their circumstances change and enables them to earn higher wages than would be possible for them without such training" (452). But she also claims that vocational education is good for every single girl regardless of class, asking "is anything more pathetic than the ineffectual efforts of women who have been trained to no special work, and who are unexpectedly compelled to work for a living? Most of them are as helpless as moths driven out at noonday" (456).

While a practical education was designed to ensure that middle class girls had a respect for labor and the skills they needed to work in or outside the home, it was also viewed as a means of keeping lower class girls in school longer, thereby affording them protection against the harsh world of the workplace or the damaging effects of the city for a longer period of time. The contributors to *Education* wanted to ensure that all girls, regardless of class, had access to a protected childhood—even and especially if their parents wouldn't provide it for them. For example, in "Vocational Training for Girls" (1910), Isabelle McGlauflin acknowledges that many girls are forced to work before they are ready due to family circumstances; however, she applauds the fact that "many states, recognizing the inalienable rights to the young to protection, have passed compulsory education laws, and if the parents cannot educate their children the state must" (524). Edith Tuttle pushes this claim one step further by creating a clear link between the school and the ideal childhood, arguing that the time these lower class girls spend in school will "give them a chance for fresh air and freedom which a factory or shop life, begun at fourteen, does not give" (450). By connecting play and freedom—concepts connected to the ideal childhood—to increased time spent in the school, Tuttle shows the school is a means of providing girls with a protected childhood.⁴⁴ M. Edith Campbell's "Guardianship of the Working Child" (1916) shows the full implications of this connection. Campbell maintains that the schools should use any means necessary to keep children from entering the workplace too early, advocating that the school "assert its

⁴⁴ For more on how mandatory attendance laws worked to enhance the connection between protection, childhood, and school see David Tyack, "Attendance, Voluntary and Coerced," chapter 4, part II from *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

guardianship with time, money, and intelligence” to keep the child within its walls” (358). Among the many recommendations made in her article is the Placement Department, a new component of the high school designed as a means of “persuading [the child] to go back to school or making it [the return] financially possible” (361). In the end, she claims that the school must “protect through guardianship the spirit of youth which alone preserves us the ‘warmth and value of life’” (365). By defining the school against the workplace, Campbell establishes the school as the appropriate place for the child, one that can protect her from the dangers of the workforce.

In examining these authors’ assessments of practical education, it becomes clear that they are attempting to accomplish separate goals for two different classes of girls. They wanted to provide courses to middle-class girls that would provide them with a proper work ethic as well as prepare them for future work either in or outside the home. These educators could assume that these middle-class girls already had access to an ideal, protected childhood and, therefore, didn’t need the school’s protective function. Thus, they claimed that for these girls, the school’s ability to prepare them for the future—and teach them a respect for labor—was paramount. However, these educators also wanted to protect lower-class girls from economic demands that would remove them from the school too early and provide these girls with the ideal childhood that they believed was every girls’ (and every child’s) right. This is not to say that these educators believed that lower-class girls didn’t also need to be prepared for the workplace, but, in their case, the schools’ preparatory function also, and more importantly, provided a means of keeping

them in school longer. These contributors believed that if schools could not offer a practical education, then these lower class girls would obtain jobs—either by their own volition or by their parents’ insistence—thereby prematurely ending their time as children. So, these educators held that the school should become a safe haven where all girls could learn and develop into good workers away from the marketplace.

However, there were a number of conflicts underlying these educators’ claims that the school could protect the girl from the economic marketplace. First, these educators could not create an ideal protected childhood for all girls—especially for those of the lower class—without keeping the girls in the school, but in order to offer girls and their parents an alternative to work, they had to provide an education that could be useful in the future. Rather than becoming stymied by this seeming contradiction in the purpose of the school, these educators used this contradiction between preparation and protection to resolve their conflict regarding what ends a practical education should meet. They used the preparation schools provided for the future as a prominent means of protecting children from the workforce in the present. However, this resolution created a second conflict. By using the school’s preparatory function to create a space outside the marketplace for female students, schools actually began to increasingly implicate these girls into the economic sector. In other words, the preparation that kept girls in school ensured their proper development as workers in the public and domestic spaces. Thus, these educators resolved their conflict between preparation and protection but at the expense of allowing economic factors into the protected childhood space. Further, it

seems that by emphasizing the preparation children receive within the confines of the school, these educators appear to be arguing that the protected childhood offered by the school must be earned. If these girls submitted to the useful courses that the schools offered, then they, in turn, would be allowed to stay out of the workforce and allowed time to engage in play and other childhood pursuits. In the end, the apparent insistence that girls earn the protection that the schools offered blurred the line between the public sphere and the protected space of childhood destabilizing the concept of the ideal childhood. These educators constructed a protected childhood space based not on girls' inherent value as children but instead on their ability to learn practical lessons that will prepare them for the future. Because their concept of the protected childhood was constructed in this manner, these educators could not prevent economic considerations from creeping into this space.

PROTECTION, PREPARATION, AND GIRLS' BOOKS

The same tension between protection and preparation appears in the girls' books of this era, though the locus of this binary is the home rather than the school. However, before looking at the similarities between the educational discourse and these early 20th century books, it is necessary to place these books in conversation with their predecessors—the sentimental novels of the mid-19th century. As Nina Baym and other critics have noted, 19th century sentimental literature typically chronicles a girl's spiritual and moral development, shows how she learns self-control, and ultimately, once she has fully matured into a virtuous young woman, marries her off to an equally virtuous man—

who may have been involved in the girl's development.⁴⁵ The books of Wiggin, Montgomery, and Porter all clearly belong to this same tradition as they contain a number of elements from sentimental literature. The adult women in their novels work to produce virtuous young women, unmarred by vanity, selfishness, and a lack of self-control, and each girl works to overcome a particular character flaw or flaws. *Anne of Green Gables*, for example, provides a very clear tie to this tradition as Marilla has to teach Anne proper religious conduct, curtail her more high-spirited antics, and enforce proper feminine and moral behavior. At one point in the text, Montgomery writes that Marilla believes it "to be her duty to drill Anne into a tranquil uniformity of disposition" and fashion Anne into a "model little girl of demure manners and prim deportment"—though Marilla despairs of ever accomplishing this goal (175). Still, these books do differ from the 19th century texts in three crucial ways. First, these books are not just invested in creating virtuous young women but in creating useful young women who can run their own homes and work outside the home if necessary. Second, these books also place a higher premium on imaginative play and a protected childhood than their 19th century counterparts. In fact, most of the adult caretakers in the books come to enjoy, appreciate, and value the girls' games rather than attempting to impede their imaginative play. Finally, these books depict an internal struggle within the caretakers between the

⁴⁵ For more on the patterns found in these 19th century texts, see Nina Baym, *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels By and About Women in America* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978), Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, and Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985).

need to protect the girl and the need to prepare the girl for the future—a conflict not found in the 19th century texts.

Like the contributors to *Education*, the primary caregivers in *Pollyanna*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*—Aunt Polly, Marilla, and Aunt Miranda respectively—are invested in protecting the girls, but they still want them to learn a good work ethic and be prepared for their future vocations. So, like the students referenced in *Education*, Anne, Rebecca, and Pollyanna are all expected to earn their protected childhoods by submitting to the rules and regulations of their households and the lessons that their caretakers determine are necessary for their development. It must be noted that the protection that is offered in these books is configured differently than that provided by the school. Protection is not just confined to the caretaker's ability to keep her girl from working outside the home; proper protection also involves the caretaker's ability to show love and affection to her girl. In these books, each caretaker engages in an internal struggle between her need to impart practical and useful domestic lessons and her desire to enjoy the girl's presence in her home. The inability to resolve their internal struggles allows the home to simultaneously protect the girl and her ideal childhood and prepare her for future work. To understand how and why these characters' inability to resolve their internal struggles allows the home to protect and prepare these girls requires first exploring how protection and preparation function in these books.

Each book begins with the girl in the throes of an economic crisis and, therefore, in need of protection. Rebecca and Pollyanna are arriving to stay with curmudgeonly

relatives because they can no longer afford to stay where they are currently living. Rebecca is sent to her Aunts Miranda and Jane both to improve her opportunities—as Rebecca herself notes she will go to school and then to seminary by virtue of her Aunts’ help—and also to relieve the financial burden at home. Pollyanna’s father, a poor minister, has recently passed away, leaving Pollyanna penniless and in need of a guardian who can pay for her education and her upkeep. Anne’s situation is slightly different, as her reason for being sent to Green Gables is entirely economic; unbeknownst to her, her foster family expected not a girl but a boy who can help with farm chores in return for a good home and good education.⁴⁶ It would seem that these economic crises could end these characters’ childhoods before they really begin, especially since each girl, due to her financial circumstances, is required to perform some type of work in her home; however, initially, each girl’s inventive, creative nature allows her to maintain her play-filled childhood.

Rebecca, who “amused her mother and her family generally” but was considered to be lacking in “everyday common sense,” is able to nourish an active imagination in spite of her impoverished upbringing because while Rebecca is aware of her family’s poverty, she does not seem to register that it is something problematic despite the fact that she and her older sister Hannah are basically raising their younger siblings.⁴⁷ She

⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, discussions of adoption at the turn of the century engaged issues of use value (economic worth) versus emotional value. For more on this aspect of adoption, see Mavis Reimer, “A Daughter of the House: Discourses of Adoption in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*,” from *The Oxford Handbook of Children’s Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

tells Mr. Cobb that her siblings are ““dear... and cost so much to feed”” and that she and her older sister are often responsible for caring for the younger children, stating that ““Hannah and I haven’t done anything but put babies to bed at night and take them up in the morning for years and years”” (17). Rather than being aged by this work, Rebecca turns her chores into a “field for the exhibition of her creative instincts” (29). When called upon to cook, Rebecca sometimes left “eggs out of the corn bread one day and milk another, to see how it would turn out” (29). When asked to take care of her younger siblings, she sometimes would “part Fanny’s hair sometimes in the middle, sometimes on the right, and sometimes on the left side” and would “play all sorts of fantastic pranks with the children, occasionally bringing them to the table as fictitious or historical characters found in her favorite books” (29). Despite her mother’s need to use Rebecca as a helpmeet around the house, Rebecca is not defined by the work she does in the home but instead by her creative and imaginative qualities.⁴⁸

This same pattern appears in *Anne of Green Gables*. Following the death of her parents, Anne lives with Mrs. Thomas where she ““helped look after the Thomas children” who apparently “took a lot of looking after” (39). Following Mrs. Thomas’s death, Mrs. Hammond takes Anne in where she also helps look after children. Anne

⁴⁷ Claudia Mills argues that while Rebecca, Anne, and Pollyanna have “all endured loss, neglect, abuse, poverty, and friendlessness, they appear absolutely unscathed and unscarred by these experiences” (228).

⁴⁸ Rebecca’s capacity for creativity makes her unique among her siblings, most notably her older sister Hannah, who Aunt Miranda initially wanted because she was the more sensible and harder working child. However, Hannah’s work ethic is precisely why her mother cannot spare her and sends Rebecca to Miranda and Jane instead. Rebecca’s creativity is also notable because it makes others want to protect her childhood and spare her from the economic realities that come with poverty. Hannah—being both practical and older—might not warrant this same type of affection.

states that Mrs. Hammond ““had twins three times”” and that she ““used to get so dreadfully tired carrying them about”” (39). The text implies that Anne is able to find a place in these two homes only by virtue of her ability to do domestic work for the women who take her in. However, her creativity allows her to endure these less than ideal situations and, further, maintain her childhood. In fact, she herself notes that if she ““hadn’t had an imagination,” she wouldn’t have been able to tolerate living with Mrs. Hammond (39). Again, Anne is defined not by her work in the household, but instead by her imagination and playful nature.

Pollyanna also grew up impoverished, dependent upon the assistance of the “Ladies’ Aiders” and their missionary barrels. Her clothes, the items used to decorate her and her father’s home, and even the trunk she travels with were all donations and hand-me-downs. Pollyanna, however, refuses to see this deprivation as a negative; instead, as she states to Nancy, she is ““glad now we didn’t have any of those nice things ‘cause I shall like Aunt Polly’s all the better—not being used to ‘em you see”” (15). Here, Pollyanna is playing the “glad game” her father taught her in which one attempts ““to just find something about everything to be glad about—no matter what ‘twas”” (26).⁴⁹ Unlike Rebecca and Anne, Pollyanna is never in danger of being defined as a domestic laborer because her father works to ensure that his daughter’s childhood is defined not by

⁴⁹ Others have much more sinister readings of this game. For Alice Mills, the game becomes an ineffective and cruel form of reframing, a means moral blackmail, and is proven to be quite limited in its application. For Jerry Griswold, author of *Audacious Kids*, this game allows Pollyanna to manipulate others into getting what she wants. My reading, of course, is much more benign.

economic anxiety (and the underlying fear of having to enter the marketplace as a worker) but instead by games and fun.

While the ingenuity of Rebecca, Anne, and Pollyanna protects them from either accepting or understanding the harsher realities of their relative poverty, their child-like qualities can only protect them for so long. Each of these girls needs an adult who can step in and save them from what would likely be the abrupt end of their childhoods. Without the help of Aunt Miranda, Marilla, and Aunt Polly, each of the girls would end up working, likely as domestic help, thereby foregoing their right to a childhood and foregoing the education that would allow them to enter into the middle-class. But while these women do provide the girls protection from the workforce and the opportunity to become a part of the middle-class, they are not immediately invested in showing affection for the girls or providing them space for imaginative play. Instead, from the start, each woman emphasizes the practical lessons each girl will learn to prepare her for her future work.

Dreading Rebecca's arrival, Aunt Miranda laments, "I suppose she never had a thimble on her finger in her life, but she'll know the feelin' o' one before she's ben here many days... Of course, she won't pick up anything after herself; she probably never see a duster, and she'll be as hard to train into our ways as if she was a heathen'" (32). Anne's first domestic lessons begin on her first full day at Green Gables. After breakfast Marilla has Anne wash and dry the dishes while Marilla "kept a sharp eye on the process" (33). Pollyanna's Aunt Polly has a lengthy list of skills Pollyanna must learn to be

considered a well-bred, useful young woman, including formal schooling, music lessons, sewing, cooking, and elocution. Having set Pollyanna's schedule, Aunt Polly is bewildered by Pollyanna's desire to have time just to live which Pollyanna defines as time to do "the things you want to do: playing outdoors, reading (to myself, of course), climbing hills, talking to Mr. Tom [the gardener], and Nancy [the hired girl], and finding out all about the perfectly lovely streets I came through yesterday" (35). Aunt Polly informs Pollyanna that she will "be allowed a proper amount of playtime" but she also must do her duty by seeing that the instruction Aunt Polly is providing is not "ungratefully wasted" (35). Because each of these texts begins with a focus on practical lessons, it appears that, for each caretaker, preparing her girl to be useful is her primary task. However, over time, each of these women also develops a desire to protect and show affection to her young charge, though as in the educational discourse, the girls' capacity and willingness to learn practical lessons earns them this protection and love.

In *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Rebecca earns her right to protection by submitting to and absorbing the domestic lessons given by her Aunt Miranda. At one point in the novel, Rebecca mistakenly invites a missionary couple to stay with her and her aunts. As her aunts are both sick with colds, Rebecca must prepare the house for guests by herself. Her ability to perform these domestic tasks almost perfectly endears her to her aunt who declares Rebecca "the beatin'est creetur hat ever was born int' the world" and admits that "she can turn off work when she's got a mind to" (154). After this occasion, Miranda is "less censorious in her treatment of Rebecca, less harsh in her

judgments, more hopeful of final salvation for her” (161). This softening is the result of the training Rebecca has received under Miranda’s tutelage since “everything that was interesting in Rebecca, and every evidence of power, capability, or talent afterwards displayed by her, Miranda ascribed to the brick house training, and this gave her a feeling of honest pride” (162). Rebecca’s domestic abilities make Miranda want to spare her and keep her out of the family’s economic crisis later in the text. Following Rebecca’s first year in school, Miranda and Jane lose an important source of revenue—an annual income of one hundred dollars from an investment. This loss causes the two women to wonder if they can keep paying Rebecca’s school expenses. But it is Miranda, not the kind-hearted Jane, who insists that Rebecca keep going to school. As she notes, “we have put our hand to the plow, and we can’t turn back... we’ve taken her away from her mother and offered her an education, and we’ve got to keep our word” (190). Here, Miranda protects Rebecca by preventing her from being affected by their family’s loss of income. Rebecca gets to stay in the safe haven of school—where she engages in a humanities based education rather than a vocational one—while her aunts scrimp and save. Rebecca’s only “share of the misfortunes consisted only in wearing of her old dresses, hats, and jackets, without any apparent hope of a change” (190). After Rebecca has proven herself worthy of protection by being able to take care of the house and work hard, Miranda develops the desire to keep Rebecca ignorant of the family’s financial problems for as long as possible. Rebecca’s abilities in the school and in the home earn her the right to a protected childhood.

In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne must also earn her protected childhood by absorbing and putting into practice the lessons she learns from Marilla. In fact, it is Anne's innate ability to learn lessons that compels Marilla to see Anne as a potentially valuable addition to her household. Having decided that she and Matthew need a boy who can help around the farm rather than a girl, Marilla initially plans to hand Anne off to someone else. But after Anne finishes relating the story of her history during the drive to White Sands, Marilla felt "pity... in her heart for the child," thinking "what a starved unloved life she had had—a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect" (40). While Marilla's internal monologue begins by pitying the poor orphaned Anne, it ends with the thought that Anne could stay with her and Matthew because she seems to be a "nice teachable little thing" who potentially could be trained out of her bad habits (40). Thus, the protected childhood Marilla offers Anne is configured as an earned commodity contingent upon Anne's ability to take in and apply practical lessons. So, it is no surprise that from the beginning of the text, Marilla attempts to teach Anne lessons in how to keep a house and feed a family. For example, when Marilla leaves to go to an Aid Society Meeting, she leaves Anne with the orders to "'get Matthew and Jerry their supper'" and not to forget "'to put the tea to draw until you sit down at the table as you did last time'" (118). We see the results of Marilla's lessons later on in the text when Marilla has a bad headache and is unable to take care of the house. While Anne laments that she wishes she "'could have had the headache in [her] place,'" Marilla notes that Anne "'did [her] part in attending to the work'" (159). In fact, Marilla even praises Anne's work, saying,

“you seem to have got on fairly well and made fewer mistakes than usual,” although she does immediately point out all the mistakes Anne did make including starching handkerchiefs and letting a pie burn in the oven (159). Marilla has clearly been at work teaching Anne the practical domestic lessons she will need to run her own home in the future and preparing Anne to be a productive and useful young woman.

Though she is invested in teaching Anne practical lessons, Marilla still often finds herself drawn to Anne’s overly dramatic and imaginative nature against her own better judgment. For example, once Anne has already been installed in the Cuthbert household, she meets Mrs. Rachel who insults Anne’s appearance causing Anne to lose her temper in phenomenal fashion. While Marilla knows she must use some form of punishment to “bring Anne to a proper realization of the enormity of her offence”, she still finds the episode quite amusing (65). When she recalls the look on Mrs. Rachel’s face during Anne’s tirade, “her lips twitched with amusement and she felt the most reprehensible desire to laugh” (67). Then, when Anne finally does apologize to Mrs. Rachel (in the most over the top manner imaginable), Marilla “was dismayed at finding herself inclined to laugh over the recollection [of the apology]” (73). Later in the text, Marilla finds herself in hysterics over the way in which Anne’s imagination brings her to grief. When Anne decides she will no longer attend school—due to a misapplied punishment by her teacher, Mr. Phillips—she is heartbroken over the fact that she will no longer be able to see her bosom friend, Diana, every day. This loss causes Anne to begin to think about the future and what will happen once Diana grows up, marries, and separates from Anne

forever. Marilla finds Anne weeping over the imagined scenario of Diana's wedding, and, finding the entire situation ridiculous, she "collapsed on the nearest chair and burst into... a hearty and unusual peal of laughter" (116). Throughout the text, Marilla's amusement at Anne's dramatics causes her to feel affection for the girl, and this affection is expressed through Marilla's attempt to protect and defend Anne from other adults. For example, after Anne insults Mrs. Rachel, Marilla defends Anne's actions, by telling Mrs. Rachel she shouldn't have "'twitted her about her looks'" (64). In addition, when Anne comes home and declares that she won't attend school any longer, Marilla doesn't insist that Anne go back to school the next day or immediately assume that Anne's behavior in the classroom was inappropriate. Instead, she goes to Mrs. Rachel to uncover what really occurred in the classroom, and upon realizing that the teacher was in the wrong, she decides to allow Anne to learn her lessons at home (115). While it is difficult to assert that the protection Marilla offers is a direct result of Anne's ability to absorb proper lessons, it is not completely outside the realm of possibility that Marilla's appreciation for Anne's imagination and her attempt to protect Anne from those who are cruel to her is related to Anne's eagerness to adhere to the practical lessons Marilla provides.

In *Pollyanna*, the desire to protect Pollyanna and provide her with an ideal childhood is at least partially precipitated by a catastrophe that forces Aunt Polly to realize Pollyanna's value; however, Pollyanna's ability to help with domestic duties and generally spend her time profitably also contributes to Aunt Polly's desire to protect her. Initially, Aunt Polly is entirely invested in teaching Pollyanna the lessons she will need to

one day run her own home. In fact, by Chapter Seven, Pollyanna has already settled into a daily routine in which she “sewed, practiced, read aloud, and studied cooking in the kitchen” (42). However, Pollyanna is also provided with time to “‘just live’... for almost every afternoon from two until six o’clock was hers to do with as she liked,” though it is clear that Pollyanna earns this free time by submitting to the aforementioned lessons (42). Still, Aunt Polly’s practical lessons don’t always precede the gifts and affection given to Pollyanna. In Chapter Ten, Aunt Polly is mistakenly believed by Pollyanna to have come to pay her a visit in her attic bedroom. Before she can correct Pollyanna, she finds herself in Pollyanna’s little room. During their conversation, Pollyanna praises her small room—and Aunt Polly for giving it to her—despite its lack of carpets, curtains, pictures, and a bureau with a looking glass. Aunt Polly quickly extricates herself from this conversation, but less than a day later decides to move Pollyanna to a nicer room on one of the house’s main floors. However, after providing Pollyanna a nicer room to live in, Aunt Polly is careful to tell Pollyanna that her residence in this room is contingent upon her taking proper care of everything in it. Thus, the gift of the room becomes a practical lesson. Aunt Polly rationalizes her behavior by insisting that she is giving Pollyanna this room not to be nice or to show Pollyanna that she does indeed want Pollyanna in her home, but instead because having nice objects to take care of will teach Pollyanna the responsibility that comes with ownership. While Aunt Polly does eventually come to appreciate Pollyanna, it is crucial to note that she does not ever lose her investment in practicality. At the beginning of the sequel to *Pollyanna* (*Pollyanna Grows Up*), Aunt

Polly is still wary of actions that serve no purpose other than to show affection and still maintains some “of her old irritation against Pollyanna’s perpetual gladness” (23). Though Aunt Polly can appreciate the need to protect Pollyanna and provide her with educational and other opportunities, she does not see the need to pamper her. Instead, she is invested in turning Pollyanna into a woman who can create her own practical, efficient household.

Each of these women vacillates between the desire to protect and to prepare her respective girl; however, this struggle ends once each girl has reached adulthood. For example, once Anne is old enough to take care of herself and help take care of the farm, Marilla gains the capacity to tell Anne of her love, saying ““I love you as dear as if you were my own flesh and blood, and you’ve been my joy and comfort ever since you came to Green Gables”” (288). Only after Anne is no longer in need of protection can Marilla give voice to her love because she no longer has to worry about spoiling Anne and making her entirely useless in the adult world. The same holds true for Miranda in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. She, in fact, is never truly able to express her love for Rebecca while she is alive. Aunt Jane even tells Rebecca that while Miranda ““never said so,”” Jane was sure ““she was sorry for every hard word she spoke to [Rebecca]”” (248). Miranda’s final act of willing the brick house to Rebecca shows the validity of this claim. Once again, only after Rebecca is old enough to take care of herself and others can Miranda finally reveal her love and affection for her. *Pollyanna* is slightly different since Aunt Polly’s ability to show affection for Pollyanna at the end of the book is the result of

a crippling accident Pollyanna endures. However, Aunt Polly also never loses her fear that too much affection or attention will spoil Pollyanna—as seen in the sequel—so we can consider this text as following the same pattern as the others.

Still, none of these women ever resolves her internal conflict between the desire to prepare her girl for the future through practical, domestic lessons and the desire to protect her girl, provide her an ideal childhood, and show her affection while the girls are children. The inability to resolve this conflict actually allows for these women to maintain the ability to both protect and prepare their girls. If the caretakers were able to claim that one side was more important than the other, then their girls would end up either entirely unprepared for the future or entirely defined entirely by what they can do as workers. However, the fact that these adults are unable to resolve the struggle between protection and preparation while the girls are young brings its own conflict. As previously mentioned, these women are able to express their love for the girls once they have reached adulthood because they no longer have to worry about the consequences of their affection. While the girls are children, their caretakers worry that if they show too much affection, they will spoil the girls and make them useless as workers. By insisting that the girls earn protection (and, in some cases, affection), these women can ensure that the girls would acquire a good work ethic and learn the value of labor. However, in demanding that the protected childhood be earned, these women also complicated the protected space of girlhood since the creation of this space is based on the girls' ability to absorb and apply the domestic lessons she has been taught rather than on her inherent

value or priceless as a child. Thus, these books, like the discourse on girls' vocational education, blur the space between the public sphere and the private one which, again, allows economic considerations creep into the girls' protected childhoods.

A PRACTICAL EDUCATION?

While it is clear that the school and the home provided girls protection from the marketplace in return for the girls submitting to lessons that would prepare them for the future, the contributors to *Education* had a difficult time defining the parameters of what constituted a truly practical female education. For some contributors, a practical education for girls was one that primarily focused on learning domestic skills. In her 1885 essay, May Mackintosh holds that the domestic arts are the most useful subject for girls to learn in school because “the young girl, during school life, and especially before graduating, is excused from household duties, as of comparatively little importance” (647). According to Mackintosh, being excused from household duties leaves the young girl to “exalt school knowledge unduly and to lessen her estimation of what she is asked to learn in relation to home and its comforts” (647). While Mackintosh concedes that some women will inevitably end up working outside the home, she also believes that “there are few who would not be infinitely richer by the possession of knowledge of the domestic arts which make home comfortable and worthy its name” (650). Mabel Keech, writing in 1914, concurs with Mackintosh's claims, arguing that the schoolgirl is no longer obtaining the domestic education she needs in her childhood home. Therefore, the school needs to step in and provide this training so that the girl will learn to respect the

home and its furnishings as well as understand the importance of household cleanliness. Keech, like Mackintosh, sees this education as highly practical because it prepares the girl for her future role as a home-maker.

Other contributors advocated for humanities-based education for women. For example, Isabelle McGlauflin (1910) holds that a girl's ideal education should not replace the humanities with courses focusing only on domestic skills. Instead, she advocates combining the study of English, history, economics, and the sciences with the skills that a girl will need to one day run her own household, exhorting schools to "teach history and the progress of nations and jointly the real meaning and causes of the 'high cost of living,' the development of 'cold storage,' the use of refrigerator cars, the 'tariff,' and their effects upon the household" (525). This education is crucial because, as McGlauflin claims, "woman's chief vocation is the science and art of home keeping, and upon whether she does her work ill or well depend the health, happiness, and achievement of her family, even unto the third and fourth generation" (523). In her study entitled "Economic Relations of College Women to Society" (1901), Annie Allen notes that the traditional classes (math, science, English) girls took in preparatory high schools and in colleges helped the girls later on in life, regardless of the profession she chose to enter. Allen concludes that due to increased educational opportunities, "women's sphere of

usefulness is ever widening,” thereby showing that a woman’s education could have implications and importance outside her work in the home (362).⁵⁰

However, there were those contributors who believed that practical education for girls should endow them with the skills they need to work in the public sphere. In 1918, speaking at a conference about vocational opportunities for women, Samuel Cole claims that the education of women needs to prepare them for potential job opportunities outside the home. In his speech, he argues that women need to be educated to meet the “duties of citizenship” so that they can take positions that “contribute something to human welfare” (562). Roy Kelly pushes Cole’s claims even further. In his essay, “The Relation of College Liberal Arts to Vocational Guidance,” Kelly argues that girls’ education should not only provide them with the skills they need to take jobs in the public sphere but also should even help them find jobs outside the home. He claims that “our women’s colleges can be of assistance in furnishing better information to their students and graduates as to the manifold industrial and professional opportunities now being opened to women” (579).

These six essays reveal the difficulty in defining the parameters of a practical education for girls; however, the three conceptions of girls’ education explored here do have one unifying factor: they combine a formal, humanities based education with a practical, domestic education. Even those educators promoting a more progressive conception of female education supported a domestic education for girls. For example,

⁵⁰ This is proven by the results of the study which show that of the 100 women interviewed, over half (59) worked outside the home in either professional positions or in philanthropic work. Only 24 worked as homemakers, and 17 claimed no profession at all.

the “duties for citizenship” Cole mentions in his article could easily refer to the role of wife and mother, and in Allen’s study almost a fourth of the college-educated women interviewed worked as housewives. This unifying point across these essays is worth mentioning because it reveals a further connection to the girls’ books. While each caregiver ensures that her girl receives a practical education she can use to run her own home, they are equally adamant that the girls obtain a good formal education. In fact, all of these girls were taken in with the assumption that they would be properly educated, often with the intent that this education could allow each girl to one day have a paying job if she either wanted or needed one.

All of the girls not only have the opportunity to work in the public sphere but are actually primed to do so. Each protagonist is described as smart and capable; two out of the three—Rebecca and Anne—graduate at the top of their classes. In *Anne of Avonlea*, Anne takes a job as a teacher where she ends up being beloved by even her most difficult students and discovers that teaching is a good preparation for her later studies in college. While Rebecca is ultimately unable to work due to family difficulties, she is initially offered two separate positions, “one in which she would play for singing and calisthenics and superintend the piano practice of younger girls in a boarding school; the other, an assistant’s place in the Edgewood High School” (220). Pollyanna doesn’t have a formal job, but she does end up running her home as a boarding house and, during her time in Boston with Mrs. Carew, she functions almost like a social worker, fixing the lives of those less fortunate than herself. Pollyanna’s influence and interest in the poor causes

Mrs. Carew to improve the condition of the tenements that she owns, have a Christmas celebration for less fortunate children, adopt a young boy whose mother can no longer afford to care for him, and later even start a Home for Working Girls. While the formal education the girls receive gives them the skills they need to obtain white-collar jobs, it also nurtures their imaginative qualities. Rebecca, a natural storyteller, is encouraged in her ventures in creative writing while in school. Although Rebecca's grade school teacher Miss Dearborn finds her writing style lacking, her high school teacher Miss Maxwell encourages Rebecca's writing and her flights of fancy, allowing her to use her imagination even when writing her very first composition. Anne's teacher, Miss Stacey, praises Anne's compositions and encourages her to act and to do recitations, activities that pander to and help develop Anne's imagination. Pollyanna, who is a natural at amusing others with her stories and games, further develops these skills in the rather dull and dark homes of her Aunt Polly and her temporary guardian, Mrs. Carew by coercing her guardians into holding gatherings and parties.

Still, none of the girls has a job at the end of her story. Rather than using the skills gained in their formal schooling, the girls end up relying on the domestic skills they learned from their caretakers during their childhoods. So while each caretaker invests money in the education of her girl, even to the point of sending her to expensive boarding schools (Anne and Rebecca) or having her educated overseas (Pollyanna), all of the girls end up in the domestic sphere thus raising the question as to why their caretakers insisted on them obtaining a formal education. Though it would seem that the girls only truly

need the domestic education their caretakers provided them, combining their domestic and formal education helps them establish a new type of domestic space, one defined not only by work but also by imagination and play. Rebecca and Pollyanna use the practical education they received from their caregivers to cook, clean, and generally keep their houses tidy, but their imaginations, nurtured and developed by their traditional education, allows them to put a spin on their housekeeping. They are able to find solutions to problems that stump their caregivers and to bring beauty and life into their homes.

It must be noted that this particular compromise between vocational and humanities education is limited, to some degree, by both class and by gender. Those advocating vocational education for girls could be certain that all girls, regardless of class or future occupation, would need to learn domestic skills. However, they were also assuming that the girl would have the resources to make her home a place of beauty where imagination could thrive, thus excluding many lower-class girls from the benefits of this type of education. In regards to gender, those advocating vocational education for boys within the pages of *Education* argued the purpose of boys' vocational courses was to help the boy choose his occupation wisely so that he can become a productive and useful citizen; in other words, not all boys would need to take courses in the classics or in English literature if their chosen career did not demand these skills.⁵¹ In making this argument, these educators established a strong divide between the skills (and potential

⁵¹ For example, see Charles Gilbert "Manual Training Ideas," *Education*, Vol. 18 (1897-1898).

jobs) offered to boys from their humanities and vocational courses. Either a boy was going to get a humanities education and get a white collar job, or he was going to obtain an industrial or vocational education and work in the manufacturing sector. Those advocating humanities education for all claimed that humanities courses could make life less tedious for the lower-class men, but there wasn't any sense that having this education would improve or alter the nature of work done in the factory. For example, in her 1914 article "What Shall We Eliminate from the High School Course," Alice Phelps argues that

If the boy is going to be a carpenter or a stone-mason or a farmer rather than a teacher, a preacher or a scholar, then there is all the more reason why the cultural subjects should be presented to him and presented so attractively that he will understand, in the later years, how to combine the labor of the hands and the culture of the mind into a full and well- rounded life. (140-141)

So, while girls, in their vocation, could use their domestic and humanities education together to establish a new type of domestic space, boys were not using their education to remake or redefine factories or companies. It is only the nature of the middle class girl's future in the domestic space made this combination of humanities and vocational education possible.

When Rebecca returns home to care for her mother, she attempts to make her mother's "bare little house less bare by bringing in out-of-doors, taking a leaf from Nature's book and noting how she conceals ugliness wherever she finds it" (236). She also finds pleasure in "bringing order out of chaos" and "implanting gaiety in the place of inert resignation to the inevitable" (236). She still plays with her younger siblings who

“drew confidently on her fund of stories, serene in the conviction that there was no limit to Rebecca’s power of make-believe” (236). In addition, Rebecca’s imagination makes ordinary tasks tolerable for her because although “you might harness Rebecca to the heaviest plow... while she had youth on her side, she would always remember the green earth under her feet and the blue sky over her head” (236). Rebecca’s ability to make her mother’s home fun and aesthetically pleasing is contrasted directly to her mother’s and Aunt Miranda’s methods of housekeeping. Aurelia, Rebecca’s mother, is described as a “narrow-minded and conventional hen,” who in the waning years has been “growing duller and duller” (236-7). When discussing Aunt Miranda with her mother, Rebecca laments that she cannot bring Miranda some of the goldenrod she had collected, noting that ““there’s never a flower in the brick house when I’m away”” (237). Rebecca’s offhand comment here sums up Miranda’s very practical, very simple mode of housekeeping. Clearly, unlike Rebecca, neither Aurelia nor Miranda has any desire to bring beauty and imagination into her home.

Pollyanna is able to use her imagination to find a creative solution for her aunt’s financial problems. Upon hearing that her friends Mrs. Carew, Jamie, and Sadie are looking for a place to board for the summer, Pollyanna immediately comes up with the idea of turning their home into a boarding house. Aunt Polly is horrified by this suggestion because she cannot imagine her ancestral home used for something so common. Pollyanna, however, insists that this is the solution to their monetary problem, saying ““this is my chance, the chance I’ve been waiting for; and it’s just dropped right in

my hands. We can do it lovely. We have plenty of room, and you know I *can* cook and keep house. And now there'd be money in it, for they'd pay well'" (193, italics original). Aunt Polly keeps finding reasons why Pollyanna's idea won't work and only gives in after warning Pollyanna that running a boarding house will be more difficult than she imagines. Pollyanna's education and her upbeat nature allow her to be forward thinking and discover a solution to what appears to be an unsolvable problem, at least to Aunt Polly who can only lament the loss of her fortune. Unlike her aunt, Pollyanna is able to see the possibilities in the ancestral home and capitalize not only on the space but also on her own domestic skills. By turning their home in to a boarding house, Pollyanna also brings much needed life, activity, and beauty into the home.

Like Rebecca and Pollyanna, Anne's education also gives her the ability to see things in a different way; however, the application of her education is not limited to the domestic space. Instead, she is able to make use of her formal education in her job as a teacher. Her imagination allows her to reach her students, making them feel comfortable enough to tell her the things they most want and share the naughtiest things they've ever done. Like Miss Stacey, she also invents creative assignments for her students, asking them once to "write me letters about anything they pleased, adding by way of suggestion that they might tell me of some place they had visited or some interesting thing or person they had seen" (112). Anne's knack for recognizing and creating beauty also comes into play when she and three other girls rent a house together during their college years. Her effervescence and inability to hide her emotions wins the girls the right to rent the home

of their dreams. Anne cannot help but express her dismay at the fact that the owners originally intended not to let the home. Anne tells the owner that she “loves the home” and that she’s “loved it ever since I saw it last fall” (94-5). Anne’s declaration wins over the owner, and she agrees to rent the house to Anne because she believes Anne really does love the house unlike the others who have inquired about renting it (95). Anne’s dreamy and imaginative character, nurtured by her time in school, helps her obtain the home of her dreams and then helps her create a comfortable domestic space that she and her friends can enjoy. On Friday evenings, “the big, fire-lighted living room was crowded by callers and echoed to endless jest and laughter” (216). The laughter and fun that define Anne’s home mark it as a fundamentally different type of domestic space than either Green Gables or any of the other homes Anne grew up in. Anne’s foster homes were defined by work and seriousness. Green Gables, while a loving space, also was not defined by fun but rather by domestic lessons and, usually, Marilla’s bewilderment at Anne’s mishaps. Anne’s ability to combine her domestic skills and the imagination nurtured by her traditional education allow her to create a different type of domestic space, one that can inhabit both practicality and imagination.

For Rebecca, Pollyanna, and Anne, the combination of formal education and domestic (or vocational) education creates for them a new form of womanhood that is in direct contrast to the womanhood represented by their caretakers. The girls are able to see possibilities where their caretakers only see problems, are able to bring beauty into their homes, and are able to use their imaginations to turn a profit, to succeed in their

jobs, and even to find a new place to live. Thus, while the domestic education that the girls obtain is straightforwardly providing them the skills they need to one day generate productive, efficient households, the formal education they receive also helps them create happy, healthy homes. More importantly, however, this combination of vocational and humanities education shows that these two curricula—for middle-class girls—aren't actually as different as they initially appear. Both supporters of humanities education and vocational education argued for the practicality of their respective curriculum, but these girls' books show how both types of education can work together to make the girl into a productive and useful citizen—regardless of the job she takes in the future.

But this compromise between humanities and domestic education also complicates the resolution these texts provide between protection and preparation. The protection offered to girls can be given not only because the girls earn their right to protection but because even the girls' imaginative play provided through their protected childhood (and nurtured during their time in school) helps prepare them for their future work in the home. Generally, girlhood was imagined by adults as a time of preparation since even girls' play was designed to help them learn how to care for their own homes and families once they reached adulthood. In "Child's Play," Gillian Brown argues that "as nineteenth-century accounts of boyhood advance the values of pleasure and carelessness in childhood, accounts of girlhood present another, now equally familiar, notion of childhood and child's play as preparation for adulthood" (25). So, girls "embody the continuity between children and adults" while boys "embody the radical

difference and distance of childhood” from adulthood (25). Initially, it may seem that *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Pollyanna* don’t follow this pattern as these girls seem to engage in play and imaginative fun that serves no purpose. But, as we have seen, the imagination, fun, and aesthetic sense developed in play and through the humanities education Rebecca, Anne, and Pollyanna receive helps them create a new type of domestic space where fun and work can exist side by side. But because play serves a preparatory function, the image of the protected girlhood becomes further complicated. If even play itself involves preparation for future domestic work, then there is no part of girlhood that is entirely separate from economic considerations. So while these educators may have desired to create a space away from capitalism and market value, the maintenance of this space was nearly impossible. Thus, in the end, preparation and protection, in these venues, cannot coexist. In the school, home, and on the playground, some part of childhood will always be defined by economic values and preparation for an economic future.

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