

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: MISS SCHOoled: AMERICAN FICTIONS OF
FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE NINETEENTH
CENTURY

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This dissertation argues that the emergence of schoolgirl culture in nineteenth-century America presented significant challenges to subsequent constructions of normative femininity. Seeking to understand how literary texts both shaped and reflected the century's debates over adolescent female education, I concentrate on fictional works and historical documents that feature descriptions of girls' formal educational experiences between the 1810s and the 1890s. In Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons*, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.'s *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*, selections from the *Wreath of Cherokee Rosebuds* (a student-written school newspaper), S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, Frances E. W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph* and *Iola Leroy*, and other texts, I contend that the trope of the adolescent schoolgirl is a carrier of shifting cultural anxieties about how formal education would disrupt the customary maid-wife-mother cycle and turn young females off to prevailing gender roles.

To assuage these anxieties and garner support for the controversial work of adolescent female education, schools incorporated into their curricula dominant ideals of femaleness from the contexts of family, the scientific-medical field, the press, and racial and community uplift movements, and delivered these ideals as “lessons” to girls from the white middle- and upper-classes, mixed racial and ethnic heritages, dispossessed Native American tribes, and working-class African-American families. In four chapters, I explore how nineteenth century Americans perceived of and represented the distinct life stage of female adolescence, and how they imagined the processes of institutional sex-role socialization that would involve schools and other organizations in the activity of molding adolescent girls into ideal American women. I have been most intrigued by narratives of female education that depict girls’ exploitation of their opportunities at school to consider and respond to their cultures’ idealizations of American womanhood. By tracing the figure of the schoolgirl at crossroads between educational and other institutions—in texts written by and about girls from a variety of racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds—my study joins an emerging critical project to transcend the limitations of “separate spheres” inquiry and enrich our understanding of how girls negotiated complex gender roles in the nineteenth century.

MISS SCHOoled:
AMERICAN FICTIONS OF FEMALE EDUCATION
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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DEDICATION

For Betty and Sylvia

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studies scholars and cultural historians, as well as scholars of American literature. Ralph Bauer and Carolyn Karcher have each made excellent recommendations for further reading, and thoughtful suggestions for editing and organizing my chapters into a more coherent whole. I value the seriousness, curiosity, and respect with which they have approached my ideas and writing. Bob Levine has been a thorough, careful reader and an unfailing advocate for my work, connecting me with numerous other Americanists who share my interests, and exposing me to multiple opportunities for grants, scholarships, conferences, and publication venues. Jonathan Auerbach is, quite simply, my most ideal dissertation director and a great friend: his high standards, deep engagement with my subject matter, clear respect for my interests and my autonomy, and insightful, incisive, lightning-fast responses to my work have motivated me to become a better writer and a more critical reader and thinker. He is a model for the kind of professor and advisor I would like to be.

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Miss Schooled:
American Fictions of Female Education in the Nineteenth Century

Jaime Osterman Alves

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Introduction

Telling Tales Out of School: Representing Adolescent Female Education in Nineteenth-Century America

On July 8, 1858, Dr. Christopher Cox delivered his poem, “Female Education,” before an audience of adolescent schoolgirls, their parents and siblings, teachers, neighbors, and school administrators, at the Annual Commencement of the Frederick Female Seminary in Frederick, Maryland. Over one thousand lines long, the poem was prepared, writes the medical doctor, “amid engrossing professional cares and duties, with no view to publication,” but merely to “aid the excellent Institution of learning for which it was especially designed” (3). Like the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of occasional poems and essays written on this subject for girls’ school commencements across the country and throughout the nineteenth century, Cox’s poem praises the efforts of the particular school for which it was written and celebrates the broader aims of adolescent female education while simultaneously lamenting the many ways in which the process of American girls’ schooling frequently goes awry. The doctor explains, for example, that the Frederick Female Seminary deserves special commendation because it provides a “sacred bower” wherein “Instructor, Parent, [and] Friend” collaborate during “childhood’s hour” to prepare the students for the mental, emotional, and physical challenges of adult female life, and especially for their roles as spouses, parents, and educators of the very young (41). After reminding the Frederick graduates that their

“mission” as American wives, mothers, and teachers, will be “to guide, to soothe, to cheer, to bless,/ To make man’s home a scene of happiness; By solid learning, sentiment refined,/ To mould and educate a nation’s mind,” Cox paints a picture of countless other American schoolgirls who, because they were denied adequate, practical preparation during their formative years, are not well-educated enough to perform the crucial female tasks of marrying, raising children, and teaching:

The pert young Miss just entering on her teens,

The admiration of the lesser weans,

Leaves home for school some sunny afternoon,

Armed with two towels and a silver spoon.

A whiskered Frenchman teaches her to say

“Je ne sais pas,” and “Parlez vous Francais;”

A moustached German trains the finger ends

For torturing keys to edify her friends;

A dancing master of the latest mode

Instructs in all the Terpsichorean code;

While Madame Paris makes the whole complete

By teaching how to walk upon the street;

Entrees to make with dignity and grace,

Ballooned in crinoline and flounced with lace!

Is it indeed the little learned from France—

A bar of music—an exciting dance—

A wretched smattering of the books at school—

A nod, a smile, to be performed by rule—

Make up the important sum of human life,

And fit the girl for mother, maid or wife? (34-36)

Thus, while the Frederick graduates are armed with a “youth and beauty, innocence and grace” that Cox finds “bewitching,” and are ready “to meet with courageous breast” the “toil and sorrow,” “pain and strife” that mark “the coming life” of adult American womanhood, other girls who have been trained for ornamental and frivolous adulthood have no valuable “lessons conn’d/ to fill the dreary vacancy beyond” (7, 41, 37). In his contrasting representations of these two groups of adolescent schoolgirls, Cox seeks to aid the Frederick seminary by publicly acknowledging the ways in which the school has avoided the pitfalls of (stereotypical) deficient European-styled education, and instead enriched the lives of its students, the local community, and the nation as a whole. His attention to the useless and possibly damaging work done by more ornamental schools, on the other hand, was undoubtedly aimed at reinforcing the audience’s appreciation for the more rigorous and useful school they hosted in Frederick, to extend their financial and ideological support, and to ensure future enrollment from among their younger daughters.

For the contemporary reader, Cox’s poem also raises many questions regarding the goals of female education in the nineteenth century, the administrators, teachers, students, and other citizens that endeavored to fulfill these goals, and the broader relationship between literary representations of female education and the realities of

girls' schooling. What is this "solid learning" that purportedly helped the Frederick graduates, among others, to become ideal American women, able to serve the nation as mothers, wives, and schoolteachers? How did the girls themselves perceive those role assignments, and were they ever encouraged to imagine other possible futures for themselves? What are the parameters and characteristics of "childhood's hour," and how are they different from the "toil and sorrow," "pain and strife" of female adulthood? What can we discover about the educational institutions that endeavored to prepare girls for such adulthood, and about the pedagogical methods they employed to do so? How common was it for doctors (like Cox) and other non-educators to devote their time to questions of female education, and how (other than writing commencement poems) did they manifest their concern? What did it mean, exactly, for "Instructor, Parent, and Friend" to collaborate in the teaching of adolescent girls, and what forms did that collaboration take?

Like Cox's poem and myriad other literary representations of female education from the nineteenth century, these questions have long been ignored by scholars of American literature and culture. Three pioneering feminist studies on representations of normative femininity in late-eighteenth and nineteenth century American culture—Barbara Welter's *Dimity Convictions* (1976), Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic* (1980), and Mary Kelley's *Private Woman, Public Stage* (1984)—each acknowledge, in passing, that fictional representations of formal girls' schooling played a role in popularizing the ideals associated with "the Cult of True Womanhood," "Republican Motherhood," and "private womanhood," respectively (Welter 15; Kerber

203-6, 281-85; Kelley 68, 70); however, none performs a significant or extended analysis of these texts in order to understand how narratives of female education presented the transmission of those ideals. On the contrary, these authors tend unquestioningly to treat pre-adolescent and adolescent girls as “little women” (as do many of the primary texts they examine), skimming over the portions of fictional plots that focus on adolescent development to arrive at the all-important story of the adult “True,” “Republican,” and “private” woman, fully developed. Thus, even as Nina Baym’s groundbreaking *Woman’s Fiction* (1978) explains that, in 130 novels written between 1820 and 1870, “the heroine’s ‘self’ emerges concurrently with her growth from child to adult,” Baym’s analysis of those texts largely ignores that process of emergence—which frequently happens at school—and lingers instead over the life of the woman the heroine has “turned into” (68).

A second and related reason we have not reckoned with these subjects is that our discipline’s conceptualization of American female life in the nineteenth century has in the past made no room for female experiences outside of the home. Indeed, the separate spheres paradigm that, as Cathy Davidson has argued, has been for the past twenty-five years both “immediately compelling and [yet] ultimately unconvincing as an explanatory device,” has so permeated our critical conversations about nineteenth-century American letters that we have been unable to wrangle with the complexities of a literature that does not fit the narrow model wherein females act within a narrowly domestic, private sphere, and only men venture onto the more public stage of the world “beyond” the home (444).

However, during the past decade our discipline has launched a new rallying cry, that there be “no more separate spheres!” for nineteenth-century male and female writers and characters, no more forced separation between “public” and “private” lives that were, in fact, complexly intertwined. Gillian Brown’s *Domestic Individualism* (1990), Lora Romero’s *Home Fronts* (1997), and Monika M. Elbert’s collection, *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature 1830-1930* (2000), all recognize the need for literary scholarship to take what Linda Kerber has called “an interactive view of [the] social processes” wherein public and private intersect (*Toward an Intellectual History* 171). Recently, critics have returned to fundamental texts like Kerber’s *Women of the Republic*, Nina Baym’s *Woman’s Fiction* and *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860*, and found there early germs of thought about separate spheres ideology that suggest this binary model was indeed more “metaphorical” than “actual,” more expressive of a desire for codes and rules in a chaotic and changing world than of any real, deep, permanent divisions between male and female life (Baym, *American Women Writers* 11). These revisions to American literary and cultural study have opened the way for a more comprehensive exploration of nineteenth century female life, including the experiences of younger females, inside the home and outside of it, in order to more fully answer questions about how such metaphorical notions as “private space” and “True womanhood” were transmitted to different populations of females over time, and came to be perceived as ideal or even mandatory.

In *Miss Schooled: American Fictions of Female Education in the Nineteenth Century*, I engage and extend that spirit of inquiry, exploring narratives of formal female

education in order to better understand how nineteenth century Americans perceived of and represented the distinct life stage of female adolescence, and how they imagined the processes of institutional sex-role socialization that would involve schools and other organizations in the activity of molding adolescent girls into ideal American women. My project is enabled by several historical studies of female education that focus on influential nineteenth century girls' schools: Elizabeth Alden Green's *Mary Lyon and Mount Holyoke: Opening the Gates*, Willystine Goodsell's *Pioneers of Female Education in the United States: Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, Mary Lyon*, and Anne Firor Scott's "The Ever-Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary 1822-72," each brought early recognition to some of the founders of formal girls' schools and the curricula they developed, "to create from nothing," as Green put it, "a major new educational institution" and affect nothing less than "the course of life of the United States in the nineteenth century"(xiii). In their efforts to show how much impact was made by each of these remarkable women and their schools, however (note that the diffusion of feminist values issues *from* Troy, for example, and not between and among Troy and other institutions), these scholars neglect to investigate the schools as organizations enabled by and responsive to other social institutions of their day. I contend that such an investigation is crucial to our appreciation of how adolescent female life was imagined and negotiated during this period, given that nineteenth century female life in general is now understood to have unfolded across multiple contexts, not just within the domestic space of the home, and that the process of growing up female, in particular, occurred, for tens of thousands of girls, in schools

enjoying mutually influential relationships with local families, churches and missionary groups, community and national organizations, and professional associations. My project explores the ways in which American letters record, amplify, and critique the relationships between girls' schools and other socio-cultural organizations, and thus expose the larger institutional milieu through which young girls were socialized into adult womanhood. I thus direct my study to readers interested in American literature and culture as well as women's studies, education, and the history of American institutions.

In *Miss Schooled*, I examine texts by a variety of fiction and non-fiction writers to explore my basic thesis that nineteenth century schools were widely perceived as crucial components in a network of social and cultural institutions working together to strengthen local communities and fortify the nation by building ideal American citizens. Girls' schooling, I argue, was at the center of a constellation of institutions—including the family, the scientific and medical establishment, the press, and certain racial uplift movements—concerned with monitoring and shaping female familial roles, female sexuality and reproductive roles, the role of the female as a consumer of and contributor to print media, and the role of the adult woman as a teacher. That each of these roles exist at the intersection of “public” and “private” life is made exquisitely clear in the context of female schooling: the intimate and private familial roles of daughter, wife, and mother, for example, take on a particularly public, artificial, and constructed aspect when they are not only performed by individuals within the space of the home but “taught” as subjects and modeled in school settings by strangers unrelated to students. Similarly, the deeply personal process of female sexual maturation in early adolescence becomes invested with

public significance, as well, when entire classrooms of adolescent girls begin almost simultaneously to “fill out,” menstruate, and attract the amatory attention of potential mates. In the fictional works I examine by Elizabeth Stoddard, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., S. Alice Callahan, Frances E. W. Harper, and others, the simultaneously public and private aspects of these female roles are magnified via adolescent schoolgirl characters whose self-emergence is recorded as a prolonged negotiation between themselves and the various individuals responsible for their education. Each narrative dwells briefly on the type of academic instruction that was available for girls in different schools; however, the tales devote considerable space to what John Dewey would, in the twentieth century, call “collateral learning”: the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors one develops while more overtly engaged in the study of specific academic subjects (*Experience and Education* 48). For the fictional schoolgirls in my study—Cassandra Morgeson, Elsie Venner, Wynema Harjo, and Annette Harcourt—as well as the real schoolgirls whose writings are also featured here (in Chapter Three, especially), collateral learning involves the absorption of their culture’s attitudes toward and expectations of adult women, as well as the development of their own, often conflicting, attitudes toward and expectations regarding their own adult lives. Throughout this dissertation, I probe the interplay between the collateral lessons learned by adolescent girls at school and via the auxiliary institutions that comprise their educational milieu, and the ways in which schoolgirls were imagined to embrace and/or resist such lessons to suit their individual and developmental needs. I show how the educational process was perceived to encompass not merely the gradual transmission of prescribed gender roles and scholastic lessons, but

also the development of a critical facility in young females, with which they might explore their own feelings about intellectual work, marriage, sexuality, self-expression, and vocation.

The work of investigating adolescent education in the nineteenth century has been further hampered by the fact that, even as nineteenth century Americans clearly struggled to define and understand adolescence, they did not yet have at their disposal a common language about, or uniform perception of, this distinct developmental stage. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall's monumental and influential 1905 study, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*, was among the first to definitively offer a name and detailed set of characteristics for this period of youthful development. His claim that "the adolescent stage of life has long seemed to me one of the most fascinating of all themes, more worthy, perhaps, than anything else in the world of reverence, most in need of study, and in most crying need of a service we do not yet understand how to render aright," sparked and fed an enormous enterprise in the early twentieth century that revolved around studying and serving that population of youth (xviii). As numerous historians of American childhood attest, however—and as my own project verifies, again and again—myriad nineteenth century educators, doctors, scientists, clergy, fiction writers, activists, and laymen were similarly obsessed with discovering the general parameters and specific features of this turbulent period in order to best control its progress and shape its final product, the American adult. Indeed, as Joseph Kett notes in his seminal

Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present, the concept of adolescence originated in America during the early nineteenth century, when large numbers of the country's young people became "uprooted" from agriculture and rural life, witnessed a blossoming of occupational and intellectual options, and experienced a dramatically increased "disorderliness" in the institutions (such as the family and the church) they had previously relied upon for shelter, nurture, and stability (5). Apparently, this disorderliness began to be imagined as characteristic of the young people themselves. Harvey J. Graff claims, in his *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America*, that educational institutions became particularly important to the emerging middle-class during this era because of the schools' apparent abilities to socialize children to fit a "narrow code of character" and a "uniformity of response and action" that seemed necessary for adult success and entry into the upper classes (183). In one especially powerful description from the 1850s, Edward Mansfield thus explains that the "ideal American education" should be

in conformity with the idea of a complete republic; in conformity with the idea of a Christian republic; and in conformity with the idea of both a physical and a spiritual development of all the faculties in each individual. It is not necessary, in order to attempt this, that we should assume the perfection of any such system, or of society itself, at present. It is only necessary to place before us such an IDEAL of what education ought to be, in order to stimulate zeal, excite ambition, and energize effort....American education must ever keep in sight the fact that it is not the most glorious nation of antiquity, nor the greatest of modern days, that we are

to imitate; but that, on the contrary, there is no model for us. We are to be ourselves a model: we are a model (60).

How it was imagined that young people in general, and adolescents in particular, would respond to this pressure to conform, Mansfield himself does not venture to say. But numerous others suggested that the willfulness and wildness characteristic of both male and female youth would set them at odds with such an exacting educational plan. Thus, Alcott's *Young Men's Guide* (1833) asserted that adolescent males are frequently (and perhaps rightly) characterized as "thoughtless," "forward," "rash," and "unwilling to be advised" (19), while Dr. Edward H. Dixon's *Woman and Her Diseases* (1846) testified that pubescent females were especially prone to hysterical fits that made them violent, depressed, nervous, withdrawn, tearful, fatigued, and in pain (133). Clearly, the notion that such young people would obediently adhere to a narrow and uniform code of conduct was up for some challenges.

For adolescent girls, in particular, the pressure to conform to a narrow and uniform code was especially acute since it was imagined that, in addition to cultivating their own characters, they would soon be called to act as progenitors and stewards of the future citizenry, and be responsible for developing their children's characters. Whereas very young girls (at one end of the spectrum) and fully grown, adult women (at the other) were frequently, though by no means universally, conceived as pliable, obedient, angels of the house, the *adolescent* girl was so visibly in the throes of physical, emotional, and mental upheaval that she became a lightning rod for anxieties about how such young females could be shaped into responsible adults in time to attract husbands and bear and

raise healthy, stable children. In myriad newspaper and magazine articles, private letters, public speeches, and fictional works, many Americans worried that anything but the most narrowly focused domestic education would result in “mannish young women, ambitious to excel in everything but as matrons of families—a life which they abhor,” while others fretted that the female mind was inherently incapable of absorbing, processing, or producing intellectually meritorious work—that is, not without doing significant damage to her reproductive functioning (Wright 114).

As the nineteenth century progressed and increasing numbers of adolescent girls attended school, public debates over the possibly detrimental effects of female education continually stoked public anxiety about formal girls’ schooling, and the schools themselves remained in a precarious position, dependent as they were upon popular support. I suggest here that, in order to assuage public anxieties, the schools frequently incorporated into their curricula dominant ideals of femaleness garnered from several more powerful and influential institutional contexts of their own cultural moments, including the family, the scientific/medical field, the press, and certain racial and community uplift movements. Generally speaking, I discuss the relationships between girls’ schools and these other institutions one at a time (that is, one per chapter); however, due to the resilience of certain institutions (such as the church) and the longevity of certain ideologies (such as the Cult of True Womanhood) across time as well as racial and ethnic lines, there is some overlap among my individual chapters. The formal educational institution was increasingly imagined by proponents of girls schooling as a stage on which girls could learn and practice the roles that their culture(s) expected

them to play as adult women at the same time that they learned about and created their emerging “selves,” their wishes and desires for grown-up life. By integrating dominant models of femininity into the curriculum of these institutions, adolescent girls’ schools stabilized their public image and helped to ensure their own perpetuity. They also, whether deliberately or inadvertently, created a space—a “sacred bower,” as Cox called it—for young females to learn, reflect upon, embrace, and sometimes reject those same models. As the readings in *Miss Schooled* suggest, I have been most intrigued by narratives of female education that depict girls’ exploitation of their opportunities at school to consider and respond to their cultures’ idealizations of American womanhood. One distinguishing feature of my study is that it showcases adolescent girls, real and imagined, who “talked back” to teacher, parent, and culture, and amplifies the voices of young females that were “heard” by nineteenth century writers and readers, but have been silenced in our own day and time.

Indeed, notwithstanding Barbara A. White’s claim, in her *Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction*, that “our early novelists lack any conception of female adolescence,” and “tend to ignore the years from eleven to sixteen or seventeen...as a period of little importance in itself or of little interest to the reader,” my own research has shown that narratives of female education tend to center around girls at precisely this period of development, and that such narratives were produced as part of numerous, ongoing, public conversations about adolescent female development—a subject of great and compelling interest to many potential nineteenth century readers (22). The chapters of *Miss Schooled* are organized around four such conversations

selected for their ability to best lay open the most salient debates over adolescent female education in the nineteenth century. The four chapters present in loose chronological order, beginning with the first flourishing of formal girls' school in the 1810s and ending in the 1890s, just as the focus of public debates over female education began in earnest to shift away from concerns about adolescent students and toward the plight of adult female learners being trained in colleges and vocational schools. Within this larger chronological structure, my more particular concerns with attending adequately to the variety of races, classes, and ethnicities of students in American girls' schools determined the organization and direction of individual chapters. Since, for roughly the first half of the nineteenth century, formal education was described and debated with regard mostly to white (and part-white), middle- and upper-middle class girls in New England, my first two chapters reflect this demographic and focus on narratives featuring schoolgirls of this race and class. Similarly, since formal education became increasingly available to less advantaged Native American and African-American populations during the second half of the century, I chose for the second half of this study to examine texts in which girls of color were sent to schools somewhat further west and south. Finally, for each population and time period I examine, I tease out and explore the relationships that existed between formal girls' schools and the powerful social institutions and movements that helped to shape them. Moving back and forth between the historical realities of those relationships and their fictional representations in literature helps me to explain how the texts I examine participated in the process of institutional socialization that ultimately affected thousands of American girls and women throughout the nineteenth century.

Chapter One, “‘Oh, I am homesick at the idea of a school and a master’:

Negotiating Domestic Education in Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons*,” examines the relationship between the family and the girls’ school in New England of the 1810s, 20s, and 30s. Written in the 1860s, Stoddard’s autobiographical first novel looks back at the institutional underpinnings of the Cult of True Womanhood that were taught to females of her generation during the early decades of formal girls’ schooling. Stoddard’s heroine, Cassandra Morgeson, attends three different schools, each representative of the most common types of educational institutions in Massachusetts at the time—one room schoolhouses, seminaries, and finishing schools—which, despite their differences, shared in common with families an emphasis on training females for the domestic roles of dutiful child, daughter, and wife. For each school that she attends, Cassandra lives in a different domestic setting, first with her parents, then with her maternal grandfather and aunt, and finally, with a married cousin (with whom she falls in love) and his family. In each place, Cassandra confronts the shared expectations of her schoolteachers and family members that she will learn, as Cox put it, “to guide, to soothe, to cheer, to bless,/ To make man’s home a scene of happiness”; however, unlike Cox’ audience (from whom we never hear during the course of his poem), Stoddard’s Cassandra expresses feeling a mixture of enthusiasm and oppression in response to this pervasive cultural expectation that she will exist to serve and please others. In addition to exploring how Cassandra’s repeated travels away from home, to school, and back again, reflect the experiences of actual New England schoolgirls in the 1810s, 20s, and 30s, my reading of the novel regards Cassandra’s cyclical journeys as Stoddard’s metaphor for what she understood as

the adolescent female's desire to escape from domesticity and the family structure, and the sometimes equally powerful desire to return to those institutions and the (however illusory) permanence and stability they offered females. I contend that Cassandra's travels afford her the time, space, and perspective necessary to reflect upon the differences and similarities between the families and institutions she comes to know. Her journeys allow her to understand that the gender roles taught at school and within families are not "natural" but constructed, and that, because this is true, she can construct her own adult role that will suit her specific needs and the needs of her particular family.

In Chapter Two, I argue that, as the family became a less dominant social force during the 1830s, 40s, and 50s, and therefore a less trusted organizing principle for schools, the increasingly powerful scientific and medical communities were drawn into debates over education in general, and adolescent female education in particular. Such debates gradually moved away from the subject of training females to be dutiful daughters (as a precursor to wifehood) and more squarely toward the training of females as spouses and sexual/reproductive partners for adult men. "To Teach and to Cure: Medical Interventions to Female Education and Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Elsie Venner*: *A Romance of Destiny*," focuses on mid-century scientific and medical arguments about the adolescent female mind and body. In Holmes's treatment of Elsie Venner—a hyper-sexualized schoolgirl, supposed by her classmates and townsfolk to be part-human and part-snake—I trace how the discourses of science, medicine, and education gradually became interwoven in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s, to produce an educational program focused on normalizing female sexuality and preparing girls to be ideal mates for young

American males. Though *Elsie Venner* is now out of print and its author excluded from most anthologies of American literature, Holmes had, by mid-century, established himself as both a major scientific thinker and medical doctor, as well as a man of letters. Numerous scholars have recently begun to rediscover Dr. Holmes as an important figure in mid-century literary circles, particularly for his invention of a colloquial literary style that mimics the intimate consultations Holmes conducted with his patients (Gibian 1), for his interest in applying medical “insights and subjects” to his literary works, and for bridging the “residual” sentimental mode of literature with the “emergent,” realist mode (Davis 16, see also Thraikill 679-707 and Traister 205-228). Despite their interest in Holmes’s convergence of literature and medicine, however, none of these critics have recognized Holmes’s lifelong personal and professional obsession with delineating the depth and breadth of female intellect, nor how his *Elsie Venner*, first serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1860-61, applied specific scientific and medical theories to the pathologizing of adolescent female sexual and intellectual development at school. I illustrate in this chapter how Holmes builds upon his era’s medical models of normal and abnormal femininity to define the process of sex-role socialization for adolescent schoolgirls. Narrated by a medical school professor who relates the experiences of his medical student-turned-girls’ school teacher, Holmes’s novel reads the social process of female education through the lenses of Lamarckian, Spencerian, and especially Darwinian concepts of natural and sexual selection. He implies that if adolescent girls are taught at school by handsome, upwardly mobile, scientific-minded young men, their natural instincts toward mating can best be teased out, monitored, and potentially

modified. This process Holmes imagines leading “normal” girls safely through the primitive sexual awakening of puberty and into reserved and demure womanhood. “Abnormal” girls like Elsie, on the other hand, prove more difficult (even impossible) to extricate from their animal nature; Elsie’s sexual appetite and aggressiveness—which we see blossom as a key part of her adolescent self-emergence—do not diminish but *increase* as a result of her being taught by the handsome doctor-in-training, even though such traits will keep her from finding a desirable mate. Ultimately, these traits contribute to her death. Through Elsie’s life and early death, Holmes suggests that medically- and scientifically-informed adolescent girls’ schooling is useful for highlighting early in life which girls are physiologically and socially fit for marriage and motherhood, and for helping to weed out of the breeding pool those who are not.

My next chapter takes a broader chronological view of the history of female education, examining key moments in the evolution of the female school and the press in two Native American tribes over a period of more than six decades, through the published writings of actual adolescent schoolgirls as well as of adult journalists and fiction writers. In these two features—its chronological breadth and its attention to narratives penned by real schoolgirls—Chapter Three represents a deliberate departure from the others in *Miss Schooled*. “Reading, Writing, and Re-presenting: The Newspaper and the Schoolgirl in the *Wreath of Cherokee Rosebuds* and S. Alice Callahan’s *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*” begins with an investigation into the work of Elias Boudinot, a brilliant Cherokee editor who joined forces with white missionaries in the 1820s and 30s to raise funds for the simultaneous establishment of tribal schools and a newspaper. After

sketching out Boudinot's rationale for creating these two kinds of institutions, I trace the influence of his ideas in the 1850s newspaper writings of the schoolgirls at the Cherokee National Female Seminary, a school Boudinot helped to found, and then in an 1891 fictional work written by a Creek (Muskogee) woman, Sophia Alice Callahan, whose native community had close cultural and political ties to Boudinot's own. I find that, although Boudinot viewed the newspaper and the school as two distinct institutions with separate (if complementary) functions in saving Native tribes from extinction, the schoolgirls who came after him would successfully combine these two institutions in order to preserve their own cultural identities while simultaneously learning to adopt certain features of white femininity. I show how, in the Cherokee National Female Seminary's *Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds*, actual female students used newspaper writing as part of their formal education, writing in order to learn and communicate about their anticipated roles as women straddling two cultures. Their journalism served as a vehicle for showcasing the new knowledge they had gained at school, expressing their frustration over difficult lessons or their ambivalence about being away from home, trying out new identities (when they wrote in English and used American pen names), and maintaining their old ones (as when they wrote in Cherokee and used their birth names). Later in the century, in S. Alice Callahan's novel, *Wynema, Child of the Forest*, a young Creek schoolgirl uses newspaper *reading* to explore the fraught relationship between her Native community and the white community in the 1880s. Trained by white missionaries at a school in Creek territory, Wynema's critical and bilingual literacy enables her to read, and read between the lines of, both white and Native newspapers. By

comparing white and Native representations of individual ideas and events—such as U.S. government-proposed allotment policies, or the career of Buffalo Bill—she comes to understand that her role as an educated female living among whites and Natives is to mediate informal discussions that can help the two groups understand and respect one another, and peacefully coexist.

In this respect, Wynema's education bears striking similarities to the education of Annette Harcourt, the heroine of my fourth and final chapter. “How shall we ever get out of slavery?: Frances E. W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph* and Black Female Education in the Post-Reconstruction Era,” turns to Harper's much neglected 1888-89 serial novel to address questions about her vision of African-American female education that are left unanswered by Harper's more famous work of fiction, *Iola Leroy*. Specifically, I argue that in *Trial and Triumph*—a novel recounting the education of a young black girl in a post-Reconstruction, Northern, urban, African-American community—Harper defines a replicable pedagogical strategy through which educated black adults supplement Annette's formal schooling in order to prepare her to become one of the educated, adult female race leaders so needed by the black community. I contend that, unlike *Iola Leroy*, which was published in its entirety, *Trial and Triumph*'s serial publication in a small, influential, black Christian newspaper, the *Christian Recorder*, enabled the novel's didactic function and ensured the relevance of Harper's schoolgirl story for her predominantly black audience. In fact, *Trial and Triumph* emerged not only from a long line of public, African-American newspaper debates over black education, but more particularly from a specific discussion that Harper conducted with a fellow educator in

the pages of yet another black, Christian periodical, the *A. M. E. Church Review* in 1885.

My study is the first to explore this correspondence, and to reveal Harper's educational agenda for adolescent black females, which consisted of preparing young women to be teachers and informal mentors for other blacks who, even in the post-Reconstruction era, were still feeling the effects of slavery's prolonged and mandatory ignorance. My reading suggests that Annette Harcourt learns to be a race leader by drawing both on the academic and social lessons she learns at her Philadelphia public school, and those she learns from two informal, neighborhood sages—one male and one female mentor, both former schoolteachers, who take Annette under wing and prepare her for a life of personal achievement and racial service. Annette's educational experiences in the racially integrated but racist environment of her formal school teach her how hard she must work to excel in a white-dominated society; as she becomes valedictorian, her experiences also teach her that she has the talent and perseverance necessary to do so. Harper balances Annette's personal successes in school, though, with her dawning acknowledgment that success in *life* requires something more than the attainment of individual goals: service to the race. Annette eventually carries her talents in writing and public speaking out of the racially mixed world of post-Reconstruction Philadelphia to a more segregated, all-black community in the South, in order to help uplift the neediest of her race. Like the Cherokee students and the character of Wynema from Chapter Three, Annette does not become a paid professional writer or teacher; however, her adult life is imagined to include significant engagement in the world outside the home, where she helps to create

and strengthen a new American community around values formed and forged during her adolescence.

Indeed, for all of the schoolgirls in this study, no matter how surrounded and constrained by institutions they may be, adolescence reserves a period of time between the carefree days of childhood and the responsibility-laden days of adulthood. During this time, and from this “sacred bower” of their educational institutions and experiences, they explore their cultures’ expectations and attitudes toward females, and in the process of self-emergence develop responses to those expectations and attitudes that most of the girls (with the exception of poor, dead Elsie) carry over into their grown-up lives, in effect extending the inquisitive and rebellious spirit of adolescence well into their adult years. In individual chapters, the dissertation traces this process of exploration and maturation for individual characters and the larger populations of females they represent; as a whole, it also charts how representations of adolescent schoolgirls and their educational experiences interacted throughout the century with other cultural pronouncements about the preparation of young females to participate most fully in American life. I find that the institutions involved in girls’ education required less exclusively domestic functions of females as the century unfolded. From her role in the family (portrayed in several domestic settings to which she must travel outside of her own home) to her role as patient (in a “sick bed” but also on display for scientists and doctors well outside the domestic space), to her position as reader, journalist, and commentator on cultural events (circulating among many homes), and finally to her role as community leader (traversing the boundaries dividing North and South), the life paths

for which adolescent schoolgirls were imagined to be preparing were far more varied and complex than the model of little women in separate spheres had previously allowed us to imagine.

In light of these findings, the closing lines of Cox's poem resonate with special significance. Urging the graduating Frederick girls to reflect on how commencement marks the end of their schooldays as well as the beginning of the rest of their lives, he calls upon them to put adolescence away, to let their time at school (and thus their time in between childhood and adulthood) recede as they recall instead the lighthearted days of younger childhood, and steel themselves for mature womanhood to come:

From this fair scene let memory wander back,

A moment free o'er life's unclouded track.

The household group—the cottage in the vale—

The song that floated on the evening gale—

The mother's tone, the sister's gentle word—

The well remembered step at twilight heard—

All that were cherished once in childhood's hour,

Come o'er the spirit with resistless power.

But these are past—you bid them here adieu—

And other scenes are rising into view.

A chequered picture is the coming life,

Where toil and sorrow blend with pain and strife—

Go forth to meet it with courageous breast,

And from the conflict you will conquer rest!

For too long, we have heeded Cox's request, looking back at young girl's experiences within the "household group," and forward to the "pain and strife" of adult women, without pausing to consider how representations of the school period itself, and the adolescent years it encompassed, importantly contributed to the perception and experience of being female in the American 1800s. It is my hope that this dissertation will promote greater attention to the emergence of schoolgirl culture as a mainstream social force, and will continue to challenge our constructions of what it meant to be female in the nineteenth century.

Chapter One

“Oh, I am homesick at the idea of a school and a master”:

Negotiating Domestic Education in Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons*

From the moment we first meet Cassandra Morgeson, the first-person narrator of Elizabeth Stoddard’s 1862 novel, *The Morgesons*, she is engaged in travel and in pursuit of an education. The novel’s opening scene finds ten-year-old Cassandra in her mother’s sitting room, flanked by her mother, Mary, who reads a religious newspaper, and her maternal aunt, Mercy, who knits. In stark contrast to these older women engaged in stereotypically domestic, feminine activities, young Cassandra tomboyishly clammers up the side of a bureau to reach her favorite adventure book, a tale of polar exploration called *The Northern Regions*, that sits on the top shelf among other volumes belonging to her parents (this is her father’s). Having “made a dash at and captured” her book, she settles “on the edge of the chest of drawers, and [is] soon lost in an Esquimaux hut” (5). As she reads, Cassandra is observed by her mother and aunt, who make comments about her behavior and appearance: Mercy, for example, remarks that Cassandra is “possessed,” referring to her persistent determination to reach the book she likes; the aunt also notes that there is something wrong with Cassandra’s stockings; Cassandra’s mother, meanwhile, wonders why she will “waste so much time on unprofitable stories” when she might read the Bible instead, or sing hymns along with her aunt. Cassandra’s response to their critique is to flee the “oppressive atmosphere of the room” and, indeed, the entire

house (6). Once outside, she again dares to climb up high and balances on a gatepost, showing off her new shoes and mimicking the pose of a coquettish figure she has seen in a painting. When her Aunt sees her perched thus, she shrieks, retrieves Cassandra, feeds her dinner, and puts her to bed.

The girl we meet in this opening scene is only ten years old; however it is an adult Cassandra who narrates the events in this memoir-like novel, from the perspective of her married life and across a period of about seventeen years. The plot recounts Cassandra's growth and development as she matures from age 10 through age 27, focusing in on key life events and formative interpersonal interactions, including moments from her childhood when she is surrounded by her parents, grandparents, and younger sister Veronica; her schooling; her first love (a calamitous and tragic relationship with her married cousin Charles); her near romance with another cousin (and classmate) Ben Somers; her mother's death and her father's remarriage to Charles's widow; and finally, her own marriage to Ben's brother Desmond. It is fitting that Cassandra begins her memoir with this series of events relating her own restless curiosity, her family members' attempts to steer her toward a specific model of femininity that modern scholars have come to associate with the Cult of True Womanhood, her simultaneous attraction to and rejection of those traditional female activities, and the circular path Cassandra makes (leaving the house and being brought back in to it) in trying to satisfy her family's desire to instill in her the behaviors and traits deemed appropriate to her sex, and her own thirst for knowledge and experience. Indeed, this first scene—the earliest childhood memory that Cassandra will share with her reader—is both a signal of the rebellious and

independent spirit with which she will approach her life, and a lens through which we may read her subsequent interactions with others.

Too, the structure of this first scene rehearses themes and patterns that Stoddard will revisit and repeat, on a somewhat larger scale, for the remainder of Cassandra's narrative. The novel is organized around a series of four journeys that take Cassandra away from, and return her to, her parents' home in the fictional seaport town of Surrey, Massachusetts. Critical for our purposes here, three of Cassandra's journeys occur during her early-, middle-, and late adolescence (at 13, 15, and 18, respectively), when she leaves home for varying periods of time to attend three different schools.¹ At 13, Cassandra is away from home only during the day, yet, as we shall see, this hiatus from her familial context introduces her to the important concept that institutional rules and gendered social roles are arbitrary and capricious. During Cassandra's later journeys, moreover, she stays away from home for longer and longer periods of time, living with other relatives while attending their town schools. Though Cassandra remains, then, within the context of her immediate or extended family at all times, her periodic immersion into new school settings and new familial configurations allows her opportunities continually to assess and reevaluate the relationship between the institutions of family and school. Her journeys exaggerate Cassandra's characteristic

¹ Cassandra also recounts a final journey to Belem, the home town of her distant cousins Ben and Desmond Somers, the latter of whom becomes Cassandra's husband, and the former of whom becomes her brother-in-law. This trip is not directly related to education, as Cassandra does not attend school while she is in Belem; therefore, I do not offer an extended analysis of this portion of the novel, but refer to it only briefly in the conclusion to this chapter.

attraction and repulsion to traditional female roles, prompt her to interrogate the domestic duties that she is expected by her culture to embrace, and enable her to determine for herself which of those duties she will finally accept as her own.

Stoddard's "crusade against Duty"

This chapter explores how Cassandra's three school journeys represent early schoolgirls' ongoing negotiations with domestic education. More specifically, it examines the compromises with domestic duty that Stoddard imagined women of her generation had to make, when they were girls in the 1810s, 20s, and 30s, in order to satisfy their own, often conflicting desires for personal autonomy and domestic responsibility, and the wishes of their families. As I have argued elsewhere, though Stoddard was herself attracted to the domestic aspects of True Womanhood—particularly to marriage and motherhood—she was also disdainful of what she perceived to be her culture's too-narrow conception of female abilities, and the notion that women were supposed to be pious, pure, and submissive (Welter 21).² In her verse, journalistic writings, novels, and short stories, over a forty-year literary career Stoddard consistently strove to expose and challenge the admonitions directed at women—from books, magazines, families, religious authorities, and schools—to sacrifice their own desires for the sake of other people's happiness. She was determined to flesh out and complicate what she viewed as contemporary literature's saccharine and unrealistically flat portrayal

² See my "Home Coming and Home Leaving: Interrogations of Domesticity in Elizabeth Stoddard's *Harper's* Fiction, 1859-1891."

of women and their domestic lives, as well as to express her own ambivalence about the narrow domestic roles that so many of her contemporary female writers—most notably, best-selling authors such as Susan Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe—had embraced. In her scathing 1856 review of Caroline Chesebro's domestic novel, *Victoria, or the World Overcome*, for example, Stoddard neatly sums up the authorial philosophy she would maintain throughout her own literary career:

After the title (for why should the world be ‘overcome?’) Miss Chesebro’s dogmatic and pious ideal of a woman assails me in reading her book. I object to the position she takes in regard to the reader—that of a teacher. The morality is not agreeable, and quite impossible....Why will writers, especially female writers, make their heroines so indifferent to good eating, so careless about taking cold, and so impervious to all the creature comforts? The absence of these treats compose their good women, with an eternal preachment about self-denial, moral self-denial. Is goodness, then, incompatible with the enjoyment of the senses? In reading such books I am reminded of what I have thought my mission was: a crusade against Duty—not the duty that is revealed to every man and woman of us by the circumstances of daily life, but that which is cut and fashioned for us by minds totally ignorant of our idiosyncrasies and necessities. (*Daily Alta California*, 3 August 1856)

Thus refusing to idealize either women or their domestic relationships and responsibilities, Stoddard’s own works, like those of her contemporaries Harriet Prescott Spofford, Alice Cary, Constance Fenimore Woolson, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps,

consistently feature unconventional portraits of marital discord, sororal betrayal, and a variety of females whose generous appetites for sex, food, and adventure frequently conflict with their attempts to adhere to the dominant cultural view of appropriately demure and reserved femininity.

Evidence suggests that Stoddard's own educational experiences initiated and fueled her adult crusade against Duty.³ Stoddard biographer James Matlack points out that, like Cassandra's scholastic career, Stoddard's schooling was spotty. She had several years of primary and intermediate schooling in and around her seaport hometown of Mattapoisett, Massachusetts (the pattern for Cassandra's Surrey), which likely provided the model for Cassandra's first school experiences in Surrey, and likely attended a female academy in Fairhaven, her mother's hometown (34, 36). At ages 14 and 17 (for the summer 1837 and winter 1840-41 terms, respectively), Stoddard then attended the Wheaton Female Seminary (now Wheaton College) in Norton, Massachusetts. A boarding school modeled on Zilpah Grant and Mary Lyon's influential Ipswich Academy, Wheaton was dedicated to preparing "young middle-class women for 'useful

³ Matlack cites a variety of other evidences that Stoddard's novel is highly autobiographical. Like Cassandra, Stoddard was the child of a shipbuilder who accumulated great wealth during the whaling booms of the early- to mid-nineteenth-century (her family owned the *Acushnet* whaler that Herman Melville sailed in 1841) but who also went bankrupt three times due to his poor business skills; these vagaries of fortune Elizabeth felt keenly in the ways that household provisions were reduced and expanded accordingly (Matlack 15-17). During her childhood in the 1820s and 30s in Mattapoisett, a Massachusetts seaport town like her fictional Surrey, she enjoyed an "intense but quarrelsome" relationship with a younger sister Jane (Veronica's counterpart); the grievous loss of her mother in 1849, just three months after Jane's death of consumption (when Stoddard was 26, just slightly older than Cassandra is at the time of *her* mother's death) remained fresh in her published fiction and private letters for many years to come (Matlack 40).

and creative lives as wives of the middle-class professionals, businessmen, and prosperous farmers of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island,’’ and was described as “a Christian school emphatically, with emphasis upon higher spiritual values, nothing of the utilitarian type of education and nothing of the finishing school type” (Helmreich *Reference History of Wheaton College*, 49, cited in Matlack). Matlack suggests that her parents sent her to boarding school “in an attempt to channel her intellectual impulses into [the] systematic scholarship” and domestic education that prevailed at Wheaton (35).

Though Stoddard left no direct record of her experiences at Wheaton or the other schools, it is clear from *The Morgesons* that, despite her sporadic and brief attendance at these various schools, Stoddard was deeply impressed by their emphasis on preparing girls to be good mothers and wives. The novel records what historian Barbara Finkelstein has referred to as the “process of obliterated selfhood” that characterized such schools, whose “wrenching and abrupt removal from family...into a school setting of relentless regulation and intrusive control” were designed to “stamp out differences among individual students...secure a rigid conformity to rules and regulations,...[and] substitute the rule of law for the rule of personal persuasion” (“Acquisition” 116). Note how Mary Lyon’s description of another of her schools, Mount Holyoke, demonstrates this philosophy:

Social and Domestic Character. The excellence of the female character in this respect consists principally in a preparation to be happy herself in her social and domestic relations, and to make all others happy around her. All her duties, of whatever kind, are in an important sense social and domestic. They are retired and

private and not public, like those of the other sex. Whatever she does beyond her own family should be but another application and illustration of social and domestic excellence. She may occupy the place of an important teacher, but her most vigorous labors should be modest and unobtrusive. She may go on a foreign mission, but she will find there a retired spot, where, away from the public gaze, she may wear out or lay down a valuable life...her work is to be done by the whisper of her still and gentle voice, by the silent step of her unwearied feet, and by the power of her uniform and consistent example.⁴

Our brief meeting with Cassandra at the start of the novel is almost a direct refutation of such an agenda: Cassandra wants to be happy herself, not to make her aunt or mother happy. She chooses adventure books, typically associated with males and public life, rather than the newspaper or Bible readings that seemed more suited to females in “private,” domestic spaces. Instead of being modest and unobtrusive, Cassandra longs to show off her new shoes and be noticed. And as we will see on the pages that follow, her travels function not to carry Cassandra on a “foreign [Christianizing] mission,” but to increase her own knowledge about herself and the world.

The literature of school description

Stoddard’s novel, in fact, offers a unique counternarrative to the literature of school description, a genre that flourished during the early decades of female education, when school founders and advocates—individuals such as Benjamin Rush, Emma

⁴ From *Principles and Design of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary*, 1837.

Willard, Catherine Beecher, Mary Lyon, Joseph Emerson, Sarah Pierce, and Zilpah Grant—frequently published verbal portraits of their schools, depicting their institutions as places where American girls would learn how best to create and sustain a nurturing, private, domestic environment for their families (Tyack and Hansot 38). “Broadcast through such educational publications as the *American Journal of Education*, the *American Annals of Education*, state common-school journals, women’s magazines, and various associations’ pamphlets,” their school prospectuses and plans routinely emphasized how a girl’s removal from her parents’ home would nevertheless teach her to conform to a set of domestic codes and rules to guide, purportedly, any American family. In order to teach a girl how to “be happy herself in her social and domestic relations, and to make all others happy around her,” many educators deemed it necessary to construct a school environment in which her proper relationship to the public and private spheres could be learned and rehearsed. To this end, boarding schools, “seminaries,” and “finishing schools” would be run as homes away from home, where the “teachers and pupils [would] constitute one family,” complete with “sisters” (classmates), “mothers” or mother-figures (teachers, headmistresses), and a largely absent but nonetheless powerful set of “fathers” (such as the donors, trustees, and other male officials) (Stowe, *Mount Holyoke Seminary* 22; qtd. in Woody v.1, 359). Even non-residential schools created—through the choice of instructional content, the structure of the day’s chores, and even the layout of the buildings—the feeling of a private domestic space within the public domain (Scott, “What, Then” 46). Although curricula would vary among these different types of institutions, most followed the general principle outlined in the first

number of the *American Journal of Education* (January 1826), which argued that, in the “unspeakably important” arena of female education, “the culture of the female mind, extends ultimately to the formation of all minds, at that early and susceptible period, when maternal influence is forming those impressions which eventually terminate in mental and moral habits” (“Prospectus” 3). Unlike male schoolchildren, whose educational training placed them on a path directed away from domestic duties and toward the more “masculine” duties associated with the larger world, girls’ education prepared them almost exclusively for a return to the domestic space, and to roles that were themselves cyclical in nature: in becoming wives and mothers, girls might someday bear daughters whom they would need to prepare for marriage and maternity.⁵

Schoolgirls were routinely portrayed in these texts as moral guardians-in-training whose obedience and service to their parental families were prerequisites to the “immortal” roles they would soon play, as wives and mothers, in their conjugal homes.

Indeed, some of the most influential and successful “plans” for particular girls’ schools described the project of female education as an effort to strengthen the American family by cultivating family loyalty and cohesiveness. In her 1819 “Plan for Improving Female Education,” for instance, Emma Willard addresses the New York state legislature (from whom she sought financial and legal support) as “You...our natural guardians, —our brothers, —our fathers and our rulers,” simultaneously emphasizing the “naturalness” of patriarchal rule and Willard’s promise that female education at her

⁵ See Harvey J. Graff’s excellent and comprehensive *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* for a discussion of the ways in which male and female education differed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

institution would not disturb patriarchal order (Willard, “Plan,” 33).⁶ On the other hand, Catharine Beecher’s “Suggestions Respecting Improvements in Education” (1829), written during her tenure at Hartford, emphasizes instead the *maternal* care provided by female teachers “exclusively occupied...in enforcing the rules of neatness, order, and propriety, and in administering the government of the school” (Goodsell 156). Still other plans suggest that the entire institution would be organized as a large but orderly extended family, with a disciplinary “head” governing small and manageable groups of students. Mary Lyon’s “New England Female Seminary for Teachers” (1832) explains:

The family discipline should be very systematic, but of a kind adapted to the age of its members. The whole should resemble a well-regulated voluntary association, where the officers and members are all faithful to their trust.

1. It is such that the whole family will naturally and necessarily be arranged in a convenient number of sections, each of which can be easily directed by an appropriate head.

2. It is such as to bring all the young ladies under a direct and natural supervision. This will tend at once to secure order and propriety, and at the same time to exclude all necessity of anything like apparent watchfulness or nice inspection, even if the age and character of the members of the institution should not render everything of the kind needless (rpt. in Goodsell 256-57).

⁶ See also Scott, “What, Then, Is the American: This New Woman?” and “The Ever-Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary 1822-72,” as well as Glenda Riley’s “Origins of the Argument for Improved Female Education.”

Though the slight shifts of focus reflect subtle differences in the ways these authors understood the family and home to be organized—from Willard’s emphasis on the rule of fathers, to Beecher’s accent on the governance of mothers, and finally, to Lyon’s stress on supervision and self-surveillance—the broader symbol of the family consistently provided a recognizable structural template for educators to point to in reassuring parents and other citizens that girls’ schooling would not undermine the foundations of social order. Schooling would remove females from the home for extended periods; however, educators promised to return them better equipped to perform those social and domestic duties properly belonging to their sex.

On the other hand, many educators also noted that schools were *different from* the domestic space in key ways that made them superior to the home environment as an educational context for young girls. For example, Mary Lyon argued that teachers in large female seminaries were less likely than parents to tolerate or indulge a girl’s personal whims, and thus would teach her “by practice, as well as by principle, that individual accommodations and private interests are to be sacrificed for the public good” (“Principles and Design” 299-301). Catherine Beecher added that mothers, frequently too preoccupied with *performing* domestic management to teach its required skills to their own daughters, would do well to turn them over to formal schools devised for the sole purpose of surrounding them with multiple, well-trained models of adult womanhood, and systematically teaching them how to make and keep a home (“Essay on the Education of Female Teachers” 171-4).

Even though schoolgirls were being prepared for adult roles in conjugal relationships, educators consciously drew upon the idealized relationship between female *children* and their parents in order to model expectations of adult behavior, and also to model the relationship they desired to see between schoolgirls and school authorities. Evidence suggests that they did so for three reasons. First, the students' deferential relationship to her blood relations supplied a compelling, ready-to-hand structural model for the organizational hierarchy of the school, transferring expectations of obedience, loyalty, and duty between children and parents to the relationship between students and teachers. Second, a girl's deference to parents and teachers would not only guide her conduct at school, but would underwrite the lessons she learned there about her future role as wife and mother, when she would also be expected to exhibit these qualities. Schools exploited similarities between daughter-, wife-, and motherhood, collapsing distinctions between them rather than separating them out into unique stages of life the way we do today. The fact that schools were not yet divided into grades by age, as they would begin to be in the 1840s (see my next chapter), surely contributed to this conflation of life stages and the roles that were thought to inhere in them.

Third, the deliberate employment of the model of family relationships additionally provided an ideological bulwark against growing concerns that, because female education took a girl *out* of her domestic space, it might lead to the demise of the family. Some had quarreled that formal schooling would rob the family of a crucial female helpmeet and usurp a mother's influence over her daughter (Woody v.1, 360). Others lamented that, because girls were achieving literacy and studying such

“masculine” subjects as geography or government, learned “wives and daughters would look over the shoulders of their husbands and fathers” and upset family order by offering “to correct such errors in spelling as they might commit” (“Thoughts on the Education of Females,” 349; Small 281, qtd. in Tyack and Hansot 26). Still others feared that girls in school were making “rapid advances towards manhood,” and thus echoed a common complaint that educated women would not catch husbands or bear children—a recurring theme that I take up in my next chapter—and they argued that this would ultimately bring about the downfall of the American family. In response to these concerns, school leaders promised that teacher-student relations would honor the filial duties of parents and children without permanently replacing or otherwise challenging them. Many advocates of female education emphasized their intentions to protect the sanctity of the home, and to cultivate the girls’ proper sense of responsibility in actively preserving both consanguineal and conjugal family integrity.

Given the prevalence of this genre and the cultivation of a schoolgirl’s “still and gentle voice,” it is little wonder that the early nineteenth-century American schoolgirl was rarely heard to “whisper” her own desires to study (or not), much less to challenge the particular educational practices that, paradoxically, took her out of her parents’ home only to more deeply entrench her in the domestic sphere. Though many of the earliest American novels featured either schoolgirl characters or stories about the education of women during the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries—for example, Foster’s *The Coquette*, Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple*, Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy*, and Sedgwick’s *A New England Tale*—none featured a first-person narrator, and none are

concerned with exploring how a young girl might profitably adapt such an oppressive, “self-obliterating” educational system to more liberating ends. In 1862, however, the publication of Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons* finally gave American readers a pointedly ambivalent (albeit fictional) first-person account of a schoolgirl’s experiences with domestic education, at home and at school, in the 1810s, 20s, and 30s.⁷ Given the above depictions of female education and its intimate relationship to the interests of the patriarchal family, it is unsurprising that Cassandra’s family is ever-present in her narrative of her school years; even the novel’s title suggests the predominance of her forbears in this account of her deeply personal experiences growing up female in early nineteenth-century Massachusetts. In *The Morgesons*, though, Cassandra negotiates her conflicts with such potentially self-obliterating educational systems via the process of leaving and returning home—alternating between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the private and the public, duty to self and duty to others—until, I argue, she is finally able to strike a compromise between the expectations that are “cut and fashioned” for her, and the circumstances of her daily life, her idiosyncrasies, and her personal wishes. Stoddard foregrounds her protagonist’s struggles to reach these compromises by focusing on a specific type of family relationship—parental, ancestral, and conjugal—during each of Cassandra’s three school terms.

⁷ Many scholars have noted the similarities in voice and tone between *The Morgesons* and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, which Stoddard claimed as a favorite. See Sandra Zagarell’s “The Repossession of a Heritage: Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons*,” and Louise Penner’s “Domesticity and Self-Possession in *The Morgesons* and *Jane Eyre*,” as well as Susan K. Harris’s “Projecting the I/conoclast” and Dawn Hendwood’s “First-Person Storytelling in Elizabeth Stoddard’s *Morgesons*. ”

As Cassandra attends each school and lives with a different group of relatives, she learns about a particular kind of female duty that is expected of her—filial obedience, Christian benevolence, and wifely submission—and explores the discrepancies she perceives between her needs and the needs of others. On a literal level, Cassandra’s home-leaving and home-coming pattern reflects the movement of many middle-class adolescent females whose attendance in the new coeducational and all-girls’ schools was often sporadic, due to the fact that their parents remained unconvinced of their educational or social value, or else required their daughters’ help at home. Figuratively, though, Cassandra’s repeated travels also underscore how the roles for which adolescent girls were being formally educated took them out of their parental homes and yet never truly removed them from the domestic sphere, precipitating a frustration over what many girls observed as “the contrast between ideals of independence and liberty learned from books and the actuality that they had to confine their aspirations to marriage and motherhood” (Boylan 161; cf. Kelley 62). Thus, when Cassandra exclaims at the start of one school term, “Oh, I am homesick at the idea of a school and a master,” she refers at once to the sense of loss she feels over being away from her parents’ comfortable domestic space, and to the sense of malaise—of being “sick of” home—that she feels about being educated for domestic duty.

The one-room schoolhouse, filial obedience, and the parental family

When she is 13, for example, Cassandra attends the one-room schoolhouse in Surrey, where she and her teacher, Mrs. Desire, have “been at enmity a long time,”

presumably because of Cassandra's recalcitrance (12). Cassandra's mother, Mary, is particularly keen on sending her to school so that the child might be kept out of the way while she supervises the hired help during the "crisis of soapmaking and whitewashing"; as an added benefit, the typically boisterous and impious Cassandra might read some of the New Testament at school and thereby become more reserved and religious (11). However, Cassandra dawdles along the road and deliberately arrives late at school in order to skip the Bible reading that typically begins the day's lessons. When she enters the classroom, she finds Mrs. Desire "walking up and down the room; a class of boys and girls stood in a zig-zag line before her, swaying to and fro, and drawling the multiplication table" (11). Even the teacher is "yawning" (she lacks passion, a play on her name: she *misses* desire) and the "younger children [are] drowsy already, lulled by the hum of the whisperers" (11). Indeed, the entire school seems ready for a nap when Cassandra determines to wake them up: "Feeling very dull, I asked permission to go to the water-pail for a drink; let the tin cup fall into the water so that the floor might be splashed; made faces at the good scholars, and did what I could to make the time pass agreeably" (11). Later in the day, Cassandra's disruptive antics escalate when she and the other children are asked to recite their lessons for a visiting minister and two other "strangers." "Exasperated" and resentful because her mother has sent word that Cassandra must stay at school until evening (since the housework is not completed), she intentionally performs her recitation with "dignified inaccuracy," yet she is commended by her teacher—a breach of the teacher-student relationship that offends Cassandra's sense of order and discipline. To "punish" Mrs. Desire, Cassandra makes a scene in front

of the visitors, challenging her teacher's authority by twice kicking a loose board with her foot; for this, Cassandra is delighted to be expelled from the school (12). Upon her return home and the requisite explanation regarding her dismissal, Cassandra's father, Locke, Jr., is completely unfazed; he is preoccupied with more public matters, such as "creating a great business which should improve Surrey," and notes only that Cassandra is "almost a woman," as if to suggest that her dame school days were likely to come to a close soon, anyway. However, her mother is disturbed by the news of Cassandra's misbehavior, and looks upon her with "doubt and sorrow," saying that now Cassandra "must be useful at home" (14). For her part, Cassandra is content never to return to Mrs. Desire's school, and in fact ceases her formal studies for the next two years.

As this brief scene illustrates, the purpose of Cassandra's formal schooling at Surrey, at least from the standpoint of her mother, is to teach obedience and to serve as a kind of daycare. Though local dignitaries might visit the dame school to observe the teaching and learning that is taking place there—their authoritative presence causing a noticeable increase in the teacher's attention to actual instruction—in their absence, educational activities are entirely lacking in rigor, energy, and a coherent sense of academic purpose. To be sure, they lack the "neatness, order, and propriety" of which Beecher boasts in the above description of Hartford. That fact seems not to matter to Cassandra's mother, for whom her daughter's schooling is primarily a means toward enabling the smooth functioning of her own domestic space, and as a method of acclimating the rambunctious Cassandra to a system that requires physical self-control

(as when the children must stand in lines or recite in unison), mental concentration (as when they engage in rote learning), and obedience to adult and religious authority.

Mary's decision to charge another woman with the considerable task of reigning in Cassandra's high-spiritedness is noteworthy, as Mary herself is known to have something of an independent streak, particularly with regard to her own father and father-in-law. This irreverence is exemplified in the scene just prior to Cassandra's leaving home for Mrs. Desire's school, when her paternal grandfather enters the Morgeson home:

“Say good-morning, Cassandra,” said my mother, in a low voice.

“No,” I answered loudly, “I am not fond of my grandfather.” Mrs.

Saunders mopped her face again, grinning with delight behind her handkerchief.

[...]

“He’s a mighty grand man, he is,” commented Mrs. Saunders [after grandfather Morgeson departs]. “I am pesky glad, Mis Morgeson, that you have never put foot in his house. I ‘plaud your sperit!’”

“School-time, Cassy,” said mother.... “Tell me when you come home what you have read in the New Testament.” (11)

Though it is clear that Mary Morgeson has attempted to set a good example for her daughter by extending her own (reserved) politeness to her father-in-law and instructing Cassandra to do the same, it is equally clear that Cassandra has learned from her mother's example (and from Mrs. Saunders) to resist conventional womanly deference to patriarchal authority when it does not suit her. Indeed, Mary's exclamation that it is time for school conveniently interrupts Mrs. Saunders's delighted encouragement of Mary's

rebellious behavior—exactly the kind of behavior that she hopes to suppress in Cassandra.

Clearly, her interruption comes too late. The unintended lessons that Cassandra gleans at home and at school ultimately have little correspondence to those that her mother intended for her. Instead, they underscore Cassandra's precocious awareness of the contradictions inherent in adult life, the disparity, for example, between what adults say and what they mean or do, and between the distinctly different roles that male and female parents play with regard to their children and the domestic space. The details of the scene that she recalls portray both home and school as chaotic and disorganized settings in which children are burdensome and mostly in the way. They are institutions guided by seemingly arbitrary rules—Cassandra goes to school but her sister does not; she performs poorly at school, but is praised anyway by her inattentive teacher; mothers fret over disobedient children but fathers do not—all of which suggest the capriciousness of those two institutions that, ironically, shoulder the responsibility for developing her into an organized, rational, and rule-bound woman capable of systematically raising other good, rule-bound citizens. Even at this early age, Cassandra perceives these inconsistencies and develops a critical eye which enables her to seek out contradictions and hypocrisy later in her educational experiences, and to cultivate a sense of personal autonomy and individualism she would not otherwise have learned.

Not intimidated by these contradictions, Cassandra uses them to her advantage and ends up developing precisely the sort of personal autonomy and individualism that was typically reserved for boys in this period. Whereas Cassandra is permanently barred

from Mrs. Desire's classroom, "which was considered an indelible disgrace and long remembered [by] my schoolmates [who] regarded me in light of a Pariah," she is forgiven and indulged by her mother, who *says* that Cassandra must be useful at home but then neglects to assign her any duties, and only rudimentarily instructs her in sewing and the Bible, two clearly feminine pastimes:

She sent me to Temperance [a hired woman], and Temperance sent me to play, or told me to go "a visitin'." I did not care to visit, for...my [former] schoolmates...put on insufferably superior airs when they saw me. So, like Veronica, I amused myself, and passed days on the sea-shore, or in the fields and woods, mother keeping me long enough to make a square of patchwork each day and to hear her read a Psalm—a duty which I bore with patience, by guessing when the "Selahs" [musical notations] would come in, and counting them (14).

Each female caregiver passes Cassandra off to another until, finally, she must fend for herself, out of doors and away from home and school. Thus, although her parents and teachers have failed to stifle Cassandra's rebellious behaviors and to impress upon her the feminine filial obedience that is so widely considered to be the foundation for all other womanly traits, they also unwittingly provide her with the opportunity to step literally outside of the confines of domesticity. From this vantage point, Cassandra can perceive the similarities and differences between the home and school environments, and can grasp the lessons she is supposed to have learned in each place; however, she is unbound by those lessons, and free to contradict them at her will.

The female academy, Christian benevolence, and the ancestral family

Cassandra's first journey out of Surrey takes her to Barmouth, the town in which her own mother was raised, where she stays with her aunt Mercy (whom we met earlier), and her grandfather John Warren (called Grand'ther by Cassandra). Now 15 years of age, Cassandra is "robust" and "inattentive, and seeking excitement and exhilaration," conditions that are well-served by her father's increased wealth and generous spending habits (23). Aunt Mercy "considered my present state a hopeless one," however, and "called mother's attention to my non-improvement, and proposed that I should return to Barmouth with her for a year, and become a pupil in a young lady's school, which had recently been established there, by a graduate of the Nipswich Female Seminary, a school distinguished for its ethics" (27). Stoddard's Nipswich is clearly designed to evoke for the reader the image and reputation of Mary Lyon's and Zilpah Grant's well-known and respected Ipswich Female Seminary, which (as I noted above) claimed to instruct girls in the values and virtues of benevolent Christian womanhood, and such "precepts and spirit of the gospel" as sisterly sympathy, affection, morality, and charity, so that they would make "faithful and enlightened teachers" and mothers (Lyon "Tendencies," 286-7; "Seminary for Female Teachers at Ipswich" *American Annals of Education*, February 1833, 69).⁸ At the same time, though, the school's name is also meant to disparage that

⁸ For more information about the methods of instruction and subjects studied at Ipswich, see also "Motives to Study in the Ipswich Female Seminary"—attributed to "one of the teachers of the institution," and likely contributed by Zilpah Grant herself—in the same number of the *American Annals of Education*, Rita S. Saslaw's "Zilpah Polly Grant Banister," and Woody's *History of Women's Education in the United States*, v. 1 (350-52).

institution by connoting the “nipping” or sharp curtailment of growth that, as we shall see below, characterizes this portion of Cassandra’s education. Although Cassandra’s mother is initially opposed to the idea of sending her daughter to Barmouth—she recoils at the thought of subjecting Cassandra to the Puritanical sternness and asceticism of her own father—she eventually consents because “she wished me to comprehend the influences of her early life, and learn some of the lessons she had been taught,” and also, Mary explains, because “I trembled at the prosperity of your opening life, and believed it best for you to have a period of contrast” (46). Her father, too, agrees that the religious and frugal atmosphere of Barmouth “was a good place to tame me” (though he will make frequent trips to Barmouth and, hypocritically, supply Cassandra with all the luxuries she requires) (27, cf. 46). Cassandra’s trip to Barmouth, then, encompasses a double educational function: She is to be a student at Miss Black’s Ethical School by day, and a student of her mother’s early years by evening.

Miss Black’s Ethical School at first appears to offer precisely the kind of educational curriculum and social training that Cassandra’s aunt and parents desire for her. Each school day begins, as it did in Surrey, with a Bible reading, followed by the teacher’s interpretation of the scripture. Miss Black decides that Cassandra will study geology, botany, composition, and arithmetic, subjects intended to “lead [her] mind up from nature to nature’s God” (37). Cassandra is also, for the first time, surrounded by girls of her own age who are similarly training to become learned Christian women, and who might therefore be expected to serve as mirrors or models for one another.

It soon becomes apparent, however, that the “Ethical” in the school’s title is a severe misnomer, and that Christian virtues are in short supply. Cassandra’s classmates are a haughty, competitive bunch whose families’ wealth has for generations relied upon such *unethical* business practices as the slave trade, insurance fraud, and rum-running. With their teacher’s tacit approval, the Barmouth girls ostracize Cassandra, whispering openly about her inferior (plain) style of dress, teasing her about her mother’s rumored, youthful romantic indiscretions (still remembered in town gossip), and ridiculing her for being the granddaughter of a lowly tailor (34-6).⁹ While the girls home in on Cassandra’s maternal history, Miss Black herself targets Cassandra’s paternal ancestry. Stripping Cassandra’s personal identity down to her father’s surname on her first day at the school, Miss Black announces “Miss C. Morgeson, we will call you” as “the name of Cassandra is too peculiar” (35).¹⁰ In addition to emphasizing her intolerance of non-conformity, Miss Black’s tailoring of Cassandra’s name draws attention to her status as a “parvenu,” one of the newly wealthy families whose success and good fortune seems surprising and

⁹ Such biting comments, or “nips,” are also suggested by the school’s name; an additional connotation for this word, having to do with small, surreptitiously enjoyed sips of alcohol, is also suggested in relation to the rum-running family, above.

¹⁰ Later in the novel, Cassandra’s renaming takes on a different resonance, as she identifies with the sea, a symbol of the sexual attraction she feels toward powerful men like her cousin Charles and her cousin Desmond (the latter of whom becomes her husband). This identification initially is made during Cassandra and Charles’s first conversation when he asks her if she “knew whether the sea had any influence” on her (62). Cassandra’s reply, that she “had not thought of it” elicits a cryptic and loaded response from Charles: “There are so many things you have not thought of,” he answered, “that this is not strange” (62). In the context of their erotically-charged relationship, the exchange between them suggests that Cassandra had not previously thought of herself as a sexual creature, or perceived her susceptibility to sexual attraction. From this point forward, though, Cassandra embraces the image of the sea.

unlikely to last. Finally, when a revival comes to town, the school is closed for two weeks, “that the pupils might profit in...The Scheme of Salvation” (47). When the school reconvenes, however, “Miss Black did not touch on the topic,” and Cassandra “found that not one of my classmates had met with a change” (48). Thus, rather than demonstrating ethical, Christian behavior (or appropriate virtues, such as temperance, faith, or charity) Cassandra’s teacher and classmates (and their families) display an abundance of sinful behaviors, including pride, greed, gluttony, and envy.

At Grand’ther Warren’s, on the other hand, religious doctrine overrules. Cassandra is socially and emotionally isolated by the “formal, petrifying, unyielding” relationship between her now “timid” Aunt Mercy (who “is not the Aunt Merce I had known at home”) and Grand’ther Warren, a Puritan with a “morbid conscience,” and “without gentleness or tenderness” (28). Indeed, Cassandra’s life at her grandfather’s house is characterized by a profound “gloom,” “sternness,” and “silence,” the latter of which is broken only by Grand’ther Warren’s frequent bible-readings and prayers, to which Cassandra is forced to listen. When her grandfather and aunt *do* communicate with Cassandra, they continually compare her to her mother, with Mercy insisting upon their physical likeness (it is Mercy, in fact, who notices that Cassandra is assuming a “womanly shape” and needs to lower the hem of her skirts—a show of sexual development and maturity in the nineteenth century), and her grandfather comparing their mischievous temperament with complaints that she is always “playing over [her]

mother's capers" (37, 28, 30).¹¹ Visiting tailoresses long in Grand'ther Warren's employ recognize her rebellious nature and assert that the only way she can be "managed" is "if things are cut off, and kept out of sight, or never mentioned before her" (31).

In some ways, the atmosphere of these two settings and their approach to teaching youngsters are very different, especially in their relation to Christianity. Miss Black's school, for example, is an entirely female social environment that encourages girls to develop alliances with one another based on class and social status rather than genuine fellow feeling; Christianity is a pretext for those alliances, claimed by the upper class students and their teacher as yet another mark of their distinction above Cassandra. On the other hand, Grand'ther Warren's home is sincerely devout but rigidly Puritanical. Cold and unsympathetic, Cassandra's grandfather imposes his will upon her and her Aunt Mercy not by presuming to be holier than they, but by demanding their religious devotion under penalty of his "thundering" anger (48).

From the start, however, Cassandra recognizes similarities between her school and her temporary home, complaining that "[m]y life at Grandfather Warren's was one kind of penance and my life in Miss Black's school another" (28, cf. 42). In particular, she notes that both her Grandfather and her schoolteacher, Miss Black, are determined to break her of her illusions regarding her family's high social status, strip her of her personal and individual identity, tame her willfulness, and impose upon her a sense of

¹¹ Barbara Welter discusses this convention of lowering the hem of one's skirt—and also of wearing one's hair up off the neck, something Cassandra will begin to do at her next school—as signs of sexual maturity. (*Dimity Convictions* 13).

how the religious, economic, and emotional legacies of her ancestors shape her place in the community.

In the end, Cassandra learns neither to adopt her grandfather's asceticism nor his religious fervor, and she returns home still "lawless" and "possessed," her "wild oats green and flourishing," confessing not to have experienced any more religious conversion than her newborn brother (60-1, 50). Her father's frequent shopping trips play a role in shielding Cassandra from lessons in frugality, to be sure, but more than this, her teacher's unethical behavior and lack of Christian charity reveal the hypocrisy behind her assertion that she will "endeavor to do her Christian duty toward Cassandra," and her grandfather's unyielding stoicism reveal to her, as well, the hypocrisy of those whose religious observance is disconnected from the fellowship of other people (36).

Nevertheless, in this atmosphere that is so focused on using ancestral relationships to teach girls how their family legacy shapes other people's perceptions of them and helps determine their public identity, Cassandra does importantly learn to focus on the future and the past, those two temporal directions that stretch away from the present and connect Cassandra both to the women who came before her and those who may come after. Miss Black's school, for example, alerts Cassandra to the potential drudgery of the years ahead: "Though I entered my duties under protest," she explains, "I soon became accustomed to their routine, and the rest of my life seemed more like a dream of the future than a realization of the present" (38). Her studies and their purported relation to wife- and motherhood—but, perhaps especially, their routineness—bring Cassandra to an understanding, for the first time, that she is being educated for those

roles. With respect to the past, on the other hand, Cassandra learns by experience what it was like for her mother and aunt to grow up in Barmouth under their stern father, and in a town obsessed with wealth and privilege. She perceives that, through her own genuine Christian pity, fellow feeling, and benevolence, she might offer acceptance and love to family members like her mother and aunt, who have been shamed by other people's rumors, class posturing, and strict religious devotion.

The female academy, wifely submission, and the conjugal family

Cassandra's final school trip occurs two years later, when she is barely 18, after a stranger appears at her parents' home announcing himself as a cousin. Charles Morgeson stays in Surrey three days, during which time, Cassandra recalls, he exerts over her a mysterious "authority [that] I did not resist" (62). Though Charles is married and a blood relative, his irresistible authority over Cassandra is quickly revealed to be sexual in nature, and an undeniable mutual attraction not to be quelled by social (or even Biblical) prohibitions against adultery and incest. Now nearing the end of her adolescence and, therefore, particularly sensitive to physical and sexual stimulation (for she is always "hungry" and "conscious of the ebb and flow of blood through my heart, felt it when it eddied up into my face, and touched my brain with its flame-colored wave" (67, 77)), Cassandra finds herself fascinated by (and somewhat naive about) Charles's influence over her. Thus, when Charles proposes to Locke and Mary that Cassandra would benefit from "our Academy" and the "advantages" of their "society," and asks if they wish to "give Miss Cassandra a finish at Rosville," she appears eager to live with Charles and his family while attending the local school (62-3). Her parents hardly know Charles

Morgeson, yet they consent to let her go, as Cassandra's father seems particularly interested in her finding a suitable mate among their cousin's affluent social set (79, cf. 87, 101).

If Cassandra's education in Surrey was about the role of the parental family in one's development, and Barmouth about the influence of a girl's ancestral family upon her status in the community, her year spent at Rosville is meant to instruct her more directly in the domestic duties that women are expected to fulfill in conjugal relationships, including housekeeping, entertaining, and child rearing. At Rosville's Academy, where 60 boys and girls of varying ages are taught in separate (gendered) departments, Cassandra is also to learn the academic and social skills that her culture expects middle-class women to know in order to be good wives. Thus, her studies in history and physical philosophy (science), for example, are rounded out by the ornamental branches of singing and dancing, a combination that is intended to turn women into agreeable companions for accomplished young men (73).¹² Her school lessons, moreover, find their complement in Charles's home, where Alice puts theory

¹² In this respect, Rosville is *not* a typical “finishing school”—a type of educational establishment that was frowned upon in Stoddard’s day for its strictly ornamental focus, its mimicking of European upper-class schools, and its rejection, therefore, of the purportedly more democratic and egalitarian American academies (Cott, *Bonds* 118). As Mary Kelley has noted, however, American female academies like the one Cassandra attends were not as egalitarian as they liked to claim. These schools “offered [girls] the cumulative and final academic experience, rather than preparation for the more advanced learning awaiting males in colleges. It was a clear signal directly related to the contrasting roles to be played by men and women as adults. The male’s role would be public and his choice of occupation multiple, while the female’s would be private and her occupation singularly domestic...Regardless of the rigor or depth in their academic offerings, these institutions’ basic mission and intent were to instill a sense of female being and place that was unmistakably social and domestic” (*Private Woman* 61).

into practice: “an excellent housekeeper,” a devoted mother to her and Charles’s three children, and an attractive, socially accomplished, indulgent wife who tolerates her husband’s “oddities” (and especially his extravagant expenditures on horses and flowers), Alice models the wifely behaviors for which Rosville Academy girls are being trained (70). Cassandra learns from her “how to adjust chairs, books, and mats in straight lines, to fold articles without making odd corners and wrinkles. At last I improved so much that I could find what I was seeking in a drawer, without harrowing it with my fingers, and began to see beauty in order” (75-6). In addition to learning how to meet the “exacting, systematic taste” of Alice’s husband, Cassandra learns how to dress well, how to wear her hair in a becoming way, and how to be sociable and well-liked (76). “Gratified” that Cassandra is “sought by the young people of her set and the Academy,” Alice gives “little parties and large ones” as rewards for her learning her lessons so well, and also, perhaps, as opportunities to further practice and hone her new skills (75).

Perhaps most importantly, though, from her intimate vantage point in their home, Cassandra perceives that Alice and Charles contentedly coexist in separate spheres—of emotion, if not location—and that Alice’s submission to Charles’s “exacting taste” is not necessarily a signifier of her affection for him (nor is his providing for his family financially a marker of his love for them):

I discovered that there was little love between him and Alice. I never heard from either an expression denoting that each felt an interest in the other’s individual life; neither was there any of that conjugal freemasonry which bores one so to witness. But Alice was not unhappy. Her ideas of love ended with marriage; what

came afterward—children, housekeeping, and the claims of society—sufficed her needs....Their relation was no unhappiness to him [either]; he thought, I dare say, if he thought at all, that it was a natural one (74).

Though Cassandra expresses surprise at this “discovery” she has made, Stoddard suggests that the Academy—with its overemphasis on the showiness of marriage and the apparently “natural” lack of intimacy in married life—may prepare females and males alike to banish their cherished expectations for a more passionate and connected conjugal union. Indeed, Stoddard’s critique of the superficiality of the Academy and its overemphasis on marriage for marriage’s sake is beautifully exemplified in one scene where Cassandra meets her cousin Ben Somers for the first time. Enjoying a walk behind Rosville’s Academy one evening, Cassandra watches her friend Helen as she begins to practice a new dance step. Suddenly, as if on cue,

The door of a house opposite us opened, and a tall youth came out, hat in hand.

Without evincing surprise, he advanced toward Helen, gravely dancing the same step; they finished the figure with unmoved countenances. “Come now,” I said, taking her arm. He then made a series of bows to us, retreating to the house, with his face toward us, till he reached the door and closed it (88, my emphasis).

Like some bizarre human cuckoo-clock, Ben and Helen represent the ways in which the finishing school reduces romantic relationships to a choreographed and passionless formality. Like Charles and Alice, who seem merely to go through the motions of marriage and who evince no interest or sympathy for one another’s daily cares, Ben and Helen quite literally revolve around one another, yet they say nothing and show no

emotion. Their exchange is purely physical without being passionate or sexual, perhaps like the relationship that, between Charles and Alice (and likely many other couples), has produced children but not real emotional connection. Because Ben and Helen are both students, Stoddard suggests that it is part of their educational training that Ben learns to respond to the ornament being displayed by the dancing female outside his dormitory, and that he always be at the ready, hat in hand, for such an opportunity to meet and partner with her. On the other hand, Helen's willingness (not eagerness) to dance with the approaching male, and the ease with which she is drawn away from him, suggests a kind of (understandable) take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward such mechanical romantic relationships that are really just for show.

By contrast, however, Cassandra's own relationship with Charles teaches her that relationships between men and women can be much more complex and internally motivated than the relationships she perceives between Charles and Alice, or mimed in the dance shared by Ben and Helen, even as they exhibit some of the same inherently automatic or mechanical qualities. Describing her own acclimation to her new living arrangement, Cassandra notes:

I fell into the habit of guessing each day whether I was to offend or please him, and then into that of intending to please. An intangible, silent, magnetic feeling existed between us, changing and developing according to its own mysterious law, remaining intact in spite of the contests between us of resistance and defiance. But my feeling died or slumbered when I was beyond the limits of his personal influence. When in his presence I was so pervaded by it that I moved as

if under a pivot; when away my natural elasticity prevailed, and I held the same relation to others that I should have held if I had not known him. This continued until the secret was divined, and then his influence over me was better remembered (74).

“The secret” to which Cassandra refers is her developing sexual and emotional attraction toward Charles, which compels her to move automatically in a way that pleases and brings her closer to him. Unlike Ben and Helen’s passionless movements, which follow a pattern already laid out for them in advance, Cassandra’s automatism is an expression of her overpowering desire for Charles and her lack of control over her own physical response.¹³

Charles seems similarly attracted to Cassandra because of the ways in which she does not meet the expectations that are laid out for women by their culture, and especially because of the ways in which she defies his expectations. As their attraction deepens and Cassandra feels increasingly adult (“I no longer feel like a schoolgirl,” she explains), she is determined to explore the mutual influence that she and Charles exert upon one another and she purposefully flouts his wishes (and all of what she has learned about “proper” relationships at school) in order to see what the consequences will be. On the same day that she decides to stop going to school, she also provokes Charles by ceasing to wear a ring that he has given her, and she stops wearing her hair in the way that he prefers it (115). When Charles notices the missing ring and her mussed hair, “[a]n expression of

¹³ This lack of agency, so important in concepts of True Womanhood emerging during this decade, is echoed in Cassandra’s frequent illnesses at Rosville (Cassandra falls ill four times while at Charles’s house) (84, 99, 106, 109).

unspeakable passion, pride, and anguish came into his eyes; his mouth trembled; [and] he caught up a glass of water to hide his face, and drank slowly from it,” so distressed is he that she should go against his wishes. Ultimately, though, Charles becomes even more passionate, daring to embrace Cassandra and tell her that he loves her while they stand just beneath the window of his own home, within earshot of his wife and children (118).

Thus, although Cassandra learns that wifely submission may be the key to a successful marriage relationship—for Charles never contemplates leaving Alice, and Alice remains blissfully ignorant of the relationship that Charles and Cassandra share—she also learns in this, her first love relationship, that being a wife and being in love are not necessarily contingent upon one another. Later in the novel, when she meets her future husband, Desmond, Cassandra will manage to reconcile submission and passion; for now, it is important that her first lesson in love suggests they need to be reconciled, and may not naturally coexist.

Cassandra’s year in Rosville ends tragically. One night, on a much-anticipated carriage ride with his wildest horse (a mare that Cassandra has named Aspen, perhaps drawing from her botany lessons and comparing the horse’s skittishness to the ever-quaking leaves of the aspen tree), Cassandra and Charles are overturned. Charles is able to thrust Cassandra out from under the falling horse before he is himself crushed and killed. Cassandra escapes with her life, though her arm is broken and her face deeply scarred. Numerous critics have noted that their carriage ride symbolically represents Cassandra and Charles’s intentions to consummate their physical relationship and be driven or lead by the powerful, wild animal who so clearly represents passionate

sexuality (Matter-Seibel 30, Zagarell 48). Others have argued how remarkably feminist it seems Stoddard does not “censure” Cassandra for acting on her feelings of sexual desire, while she does punish Charles severely (Harris 163, Weir 433).

I would add that Charles’s death importantly emphasizes the extent to which Cassandra is responsible for her own learning. Throughout her educational experiences at Surrey, Barmouth, and Rosville, others attempt to teach Cassandra by forcing her (and other children) to stand in straight lines, to perform recitations, or to absorb information (such as from the Bible) by listening repeatedly to lectures and readings. However, as we have seen above, Cassandra learns most by the empirical process of observing and interacting with others, as when her emotions—rather than Grand’ther’s or Miss Black’s Bible readings—guide her to act benevolently toward the tailoresses, for example, or when Charles’s exacting tastes guide her to perform specific housekeeping duties, and to tend to her own appearance in specific ways. With Charles’s death, however, and the physical consequences that Cassandra herself must pay after the carriage overturns, she perceives that, although empirical study can be liberating (for one’s will directs what one learns), it is also limited by individual desires (rather than familiar or communal needs), and shaped, quite literally, by accident.

Returning home

After her school journeys away from home, Cassandra’s returns to Surrey prompt her to reflect upon the lessons she learned while she was away, and these reflections serve both to diminish the oppressive power of her family and her childhood domestic

space over her life, and to motivate her to rescue her sense of self from their obliterating forces. On her journey back from Gran'ther Warren's house, for example, Cassandra imagines the elation she will feel about reuniting with her mother and sharing the camaraderie of having also done some growing up in Barmouth. When she gets arrives in town, however, Cassandra is immediately disappointed:

When we rode over the brow of the hill within a mile of Surrey, and I saw the crescent-shaped village, and the tall chimneys of our house on its outer edge, instead of my heart leaping for joy, as I had expected, a sudden indifference filled it. I felt averse to the change from the narrow ways of Barmouth, which, for a moment, I regretted. When I entered the house, and saw mother in her old place, her surroundings unaltered, I suffered a disappointment. I had not the power of transferring the atmosphere of my year's misery to Surrey (50).

Though Cassandra has learned at school that she need not follow "the narrow ways of Barmouth," and can survive, even thrive, among the criticism of her peers and her grandfather, her mother's persistent obedience disheartens her and dashes her hopes for their fellowship. With mixed emotions, Cassandra comes to realize that, in growing beyond the reach of her culture's stifling prescriptions for women, she has outgrown her own mother.

Too, after Cassandra's carriage accident with Charles, she looks forward to returning home, and especially to the contrast between the physical confines of her parents' domestic space (so unlike Charles's lavish home) and their liberality in dealing with her (so unlike Charles's demanding ways). "In my room," she says, "I shall find

myself again,” for that place “is the summary of my wants. It contains me” (110, 131). Indeed, Cassandra does find relief upon her return to Surrey: “I had a comfortable sense of property, when I took possession of my own room,” she reports. “It was better, after all, to live with a father and mother, who would adopt my ideas. Even the sea might be mine” (129). However, “for all this,” Cassandra claims slightly later, “a mad longing sometimes seized me to depart into a new world, which should contain no element of the old, least of all a reminiscence of what my experience had made me” (152). Again contrasting her experiences at school against her experiences in Surrey, Cassandra confronts the ways in which her own maturation and learning has unsuited her for the old roles she once played in her parents’ home, and her need to create a new domestic arena that will suit her better. When Cassandra’s mother asks her to tell of her accident, of her life in Rosville and her experiences, Cassandra’s reply, and their subsequent conversation, reveals these changes:

“Dear Mother, I never can tell you all, as you wish. It is hard enough for me to bear my thoughts, without the additional one that my feelings are understood and speculated upon. If I should tell you, the barrier between me and self-control would give way. You will see Alice Morgeson, and if she chooses she can tell you what my life was in her house. She knows it well.”

“Cassandra, what does your bitter face and voice mean?”

“I mean, mother, all your woman’s heart might guess, if you were not so pure, so single-hearted.”

“No, no, no.”

“Yes.”

[....] “You are beyond me; everything is beyond.”

“I will be a good girl. Kiss me, mother. I have been unworthy of you.”(133)

Cassandra’s confession that she can never tell her mother “all” is an acknowledgment of how dramatically she has transgressed the boundaries of female duty, as they have been defined by her culture and modeled by her family. Unable to fathom or accept the changes in her daughter, Mary Morgeson admits that, while she loves Cassandra (and does bestow a hug and kiss), the chasm between their life experiences is too great to bridge. Cassandra’s returns home ultimately teach her that, in some ways, she cannot go home again. She must create a new role for herself that will satisfy her desires to be “a good girl,” as well as an adult woman, in Surrey.

Cassandra makes one final trip away from Surrey to Belem, the home of her former Rosville classmate, Ben Somers, and his family. This time, Cassandra’s aim is not to receive an education at school, but to help pave the way for Ben’s marriage to her sister, Veronica. At Belem, Cassandra also meets her own future husband, Ben’s brother, Desmond. A Byronic and devilish figure, like Charles, Desmond is nevertheless more temperate, and vows to tame his own demons (drinking, gambling) before offering himself in marriage to Cassandra. Perhaps the most important feature of Desmond and Cassandra’s relationship (and its most significant difference from Charles and Cassandra’s relationship) is their mutual respect for each other’s independent

experiences, and for the “scars,” both physical and emotional, that each have incurred in the course of living and loving others (172). Cassandra loves Desmond despite (or perhaps, because of) his vices; Desmond loves Cassandra despite (or because of) her indiscretion with her married cousin. Their early allowances for, and curiosity about, each other’s idiosyncracies, prefigure a marriage relationship in which husband and wife need not conform to social dicta about proper role behaviors.

Upon her final and permanent return to Surrey from Belem, Cassandra experiences both her most severe break from her parents, and also her most profound acceptance of domesticity. James Matlack brilliantly observes that Cassandra’s journey home from Belem is the most prolonged of the novel, and gets increasingly slower as Cassandra nears Surrey first by train, then stagecoach, then buggy (where she observes that “the streets and dwellings looked as insignificant as those of a toy village,” again emphasizing the diminished power of her parents’ home), and finally, on foot, until she reaches her doorstep and finds her mother dead (205, 252). After the funeral, Cassandra leaves the “vacuum of our [grieving] atmosphere” to contemplate the nearby sea—a force that is associated throughout the novel with sexual energy, passion, and vitality—and she has an epiphany in which she imagines reconciling the duty she owes to others in her family with the duty she feels she owes herself. Lying on a “flat, low rock,” she looks into a pool of water in an inlet until her own reflection appears to her. She ponders on it, “till I suddenly became aware of a slow, internal oscillation, which increased till I felt a strange tumult. I put my hand in the pool and troubled its surface.” At that moment, Cassandra hears a voice calling “Hail, Cassandra! Hail!”, and

I sprang up the highest rock on the point, and looked seaward, to catch a glimpse of the flying Spirit who had touched me, My soul was brought in poise and quickened with the beauty before me! The wide, shimmering plain of sea...mingled its essence with mine...I stopped on the verge of the tide-mark; the sea was seeking me and I must wait. It gave tongue as its lips touched my feet, roaring in the caves, falling on the level beaches with a mad, boundless joy!

“Have then at life!” my senses cried. “We will possess its longing silence, rifle its waiting beauty. We will rise up in its light and warmth and cry, ‘Come, for we wait.’ Its roar, its beauty, its madness—we will have—*all*.” I turned and walked swiftly homeward, treading the ridges of white sand, the black drifts of seaweed, as if they had been a smooth floor (214-15, emphasis in original).

When Cassandra enters the house, she announces to her Aunt Merce, “you may depend on me. I will reign and serve also” (215). With her mother’s spot vacated, Cassandra finds herself prepared to occupy her mother’s place, but only if she can incorporate into that “vacuum” the vitality of the sea, which has become a symbol for her own passions and life force.

At the end of the novel, Cassandra is, in many ways, the very picture of female duty depicted in the school plans examined earlier in this chapter. She is married to her cousin (a recovering alcoholic), living in the home she inherited from her parents (her mother dead, her father estranged from her), and, as she writes (or speaks) this memoir, surrounded on all sides by her widowed, ever-sickly younger sister, Veronica, her aging Aunt Mercy, and her sister’s apparently disabled child who “smiles continually, but never

cries, never moves, except when it is moved" (252). Though Cassandra does not have any children of her own, she nevertheless bears responsibility for the welfare of her husband, her aunt, her sister, and her niece or nephew (for the child's sex is unspecified, apparently important here only as a symbol of dependency). The various infirmities that are hinted at here—alcoholism, aging, and physical disability—emphasize the weight of her obligations to her parental, ancestral, and conjugal families, as well as Cassandra's singular ability, as the woman of the house, to abate the effects of those infirmities upon those she loves.

From another perspective, however, Cassandra's life appears quite a bit less constrained than either the epigraph or the girls' school plans suggest. She owns the property in which her family is situated; she does not bear the burden of raising her own children; she indicates no plans to become a mother; and she enjoys a mutually respectful and loving marriage which thrives precisely because both husband and wife have embraced each other's flaws and idiosyncratic tendencies. Thus, although Cassandra maintains ties to her parental, ancestral, and conjugal families, she does so on her own terms. In these respects, Cassandra appears to have figured out how to "make all others happy around her" while satisfying many of her own desires "to be happy herself in her social and domestic relations." Crucially, the lessons about family that Cassandra learned at school—regarding the capriciousness of gender roles, the impotence of many authority figures, the emptiness of a loveless marriage—give her confidence in her own abilities to create her own female identity and position in her family, rely on her own power to make

decisions for herself and others, and choose for herself a marriage partner with whom she can experience mutual respect, sexual attraction, and love.

It is important to note that, in Stoddard's mid-century representation of the relationship between schooling and family during the 1810s, 20s, and 30s, the process of obliterated selfhood is the norm, and Cassandra's ability to escape that process is remarkably rare. My next chapter focuses on a schoolgirl from the 1840s and 50s who, despite her own willful and rebellious character, is unable to extract or save herself from her culture's campaign toward gender conformity, and its particular expectations that females will be obedient and sexually submissive. If *The Morgesons* was Stoddard's ambivalent reply to the ways in which family and female education supported the coming-to-power of the Cult of True Womanhood during the early decades of the nineteenth century, *Elsie Venner* is Oliver Wendell Holmes's defense of the ways in which science, medicine, and girls' schooling might fortify that power and end girls' negotiation with domesticity, once and for all.

Chapter Two

To Teach and to Cure: Medical Interventions

to Female Education and Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*

As my previous chapter illustrated, the most influential American girls' schools of the 1810s, 20s, and 30s—located almost exclusively in New England—endeavored primarily to prepare their white, middle-class students for the duties of domestic life. Much to Elizabeth Stoddard's dismay, educators' concerns with students' wifely and maternal "destiny" frequently superceded their concerns for students' intellectual potential or individual self-fashioning, and dashed the hopes of many young females that education would lead them to freedom from domestic constraints. The republican concept of the family as a building block for the nation—a definition which underwrote many arguments in favor of female education—demanded that girls' schools nurture, protect, and increase students' sense of obligation to serve their consanguineal families as sisters and daughters, and their conjugal families, in later years, as wives and mothers.

As mid-century approached, however, key shifts in demographics, economy, and religious faith during these earlier decades threatened again to radically destabilize domestic family life and the prevailing roles of the female within it. Between 1815 and 1840, for example, a revolution in transportation technologies for building roads, canals, and railroad lines to aid westward expansion inspired many young men to leave

agricultural work in search of commercial and industrial labor opportunities in the cities, thus depriving the rural eastern population of its fathers, brothers, and eligible bachelors (Kett, *Rites* 30). At the same time, the Second Great Awakening—an evangelical revivalism that swept the country between 1790 and 1840, and was especially concentrated in New England and upstate New York—was diluting the puritanical Calvinism of this region with a number of more forgiving strains of Protestant Christianity (Menand 7). Among other critical changes ushered in by this mass evangelism, Calvinist beliefs in predestination and innate moral depravity gave way to (though were not completely obliterated by) the notion that people were innately *good* and redeemable by God's grace. With regard to females, in particular, Calvinist portraits of women as sinful, lascivious daughters of Eve were attenuated by a variety of new stereotypes including the Majestic Woman, the Real Woman, the Republican Mother, and, most prominently, the True Woman, the last of which presented women as essentially maternal, domestic, submissive, pure, pious, and passionless.¹ As a result, more and more women were attracted to the northeast to enjoy the victories that evangelism and these new views of womanhood had to offer, including greater spiritual authority in the home, opportunities for itinerant preaching, teaching, and public

¹ For more information about the True Woman ideal, see Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood," Mary Ryan's *Empire of the Mother*, Nancy Cott's "Passionlessness," and Anne Firor Scott's "The Ever Widening Circle: The Diffusion of Feminist Values from the Troy Female Seminary 1822-1872." See also Jann Todd's 1998 *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful* on "Majestic Womanhood" (16); Anne Cogan's 1989 *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*; and Linda Kerber's 1980 *Women of the Republic*, for a discussion of the "Republican Mother" (235).

speaking, and ultimately an enlarged sphere of influence over Christian social reform efforts such as abolition and temperance.² Ironically, though, these patterns of male emigration and female immigration contributed to such a “marked excess of women” in “eight Eastern states—Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island”—that by 1860 women would outnumber men in this region by 74,360. “These figures brought home to many a realization of the fact that home life, in the normal sense, was no longer even a possibility” for many females, since fewer women could expect to marry, or widows remarry, in states with such a high gender imbalance (*Woody History* v.2,1). A crisis of “superfluous” women erupted, and along with it, an “unprecedented growth of institutions” that would endeavor to control, order, and organize the female and youth populations until such time that the family could be restabilized (*Woody History* v.2,1; Melder 28).

Common schools, of course, already formed the core of this evolving institutional infrastructure (Scott 78). They provided employment for those unmarried, “superfluous” women, and childcare for the thousands of youth whose parents labored during the day. However, after 1840, teacher complaints regarding “the difficulty of managing classes that contained a promiscuous assemblage of infants, boys, girls, large boys, big girls, young men, and young women” issued loudly from the now ubiquitous one-room schoolhouses that dotted the American landscape, and educators began to look beyond

² See especially Catherine Brekus’s *Strangers and Pilgrims*, 119; Cott’s “Passionlessness,” 228; Mary P. Ryan’s *Cradle of the Middle Class*, 74; Keith Melder’s “Mask of Oppression,” 28; and Tyack and Hansot’s *Learning Together*, 16.

their own institutions for help in solving the problems of overcrowding and disorder (Kett, *Rites* 124). The (overwhelmingly male) scientific and medical communities shared with educators a basic concern for the healthy perpetuation of individuals and families, as well as a mutual interest in establishing their relatively new professional organizations as permanent features of the American institutional landscape.³ These communities trumpeted their methods and theories “not...simply as a means of exploring nature and matter, but as tools for approaching moral and social problems, as well,” and were thus readily drawn into these problem-solving efforts (Davis 17; Trecker 190). Emerging organizations such as the American Medical Association (founded in 1846) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (founded in 1848)—two beneficiaries of what Nancy Cott has identified as the post-Calvinist “shift in moral authority from religion to science”—offered a particularly compelling solution that would divide large numbers of students into smaller and more manageable groups, or grades, according to the newly delineated stages of youth development (Davis 19; Baym, *American Women of Letters* 19; Cott, “Passionlessness,” 221 n.4.).

Breaking the student body into smaller groups according to science-based theories of development did help address the crisis of overcrowding and disorder in American

³ Though the terms “scientist” and “doctor” were not quite identical at this particular cultural moment, doctors were perceived primarily as group of scientists who observed the body, while other kinds of scientists observed other aspects of the natural world. I use the terms “scientist” and “doctor” interchangeably in this chapter, to reflect that men of medicine were also considered to be men of science—happily so, for that increased the size and scope of their community and authority. For more information about the relationship between professional scientists and doctors, see Nina Baym’s *American Women of Letters and the Nineteenth-Century Sciences*, and Cynthia Davis’s *Bodily and Narrative Forms*.

schools (Kett, *Rites* 124). However, because it stratified the youth population by age and isolated adolescents by gender, this partitioning also brought into focus new crises related to the distinct biological characteristics and physiological needs of each life stage and each sex. Adolescent females in all-girls' schools were a particular lightning rod for doctors, scientists, and educators because, as a concentrated group brimming with untapped (virginal) reproductive potential, they represented a collection of future mothers who might build and stabilize family life in the next generation. At the same time, they served as a reminder of the current discrepancy between females and males in the northeast, and were thus a renewed source of cultural anxiety over superfluous women and their non-motherhood.

As I will explore in this chapter, Oliver Wendell Holmes's 1859 novel, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*, represents one important textual example of how adolescent schoolgirls and their bodies were obsessed over in a new strain of American letters concerned with systematically nurturing and mining their physiological potential.⁴ I investigate how Holmes's novel dramatizes the practice of social gynecology at school, and illustrates how this influential doctor and author imagined that scientific, medical, and educational institutions might together determine methods of helping adolescent girls

⁴ Cultural attentiveness to corporeality in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was, of course, not restricted to the adolescent female body, nor was it attributable only to the increasing zest for science. Karen Sanchez-Eppler's *Touching Liberty*, Mark Seltzer's *Bodies and Machines*, and Carolyn Sorisio's *Fleshing Out America* each suggest how concerns over slavery, industrial labor, and gender equity all required more focused attention to the physical body after the 1820s. Whereas their scholarly efforts tend to center on the adult body, however, this chapter examines how the education movements of the 1840s and 50s brought the child body into focus for the American public.

cross the bridge from physiological to social puberty, and thus navigate the terrain between what was perceived to be their essentially primitive, bestial, adolescent identity on the one side, and their essentially social and civil adult identity on the other. Though Holmes was not, strictly speaking, an advocate of female education—he did not see the benefit of intellectual stimulation for most girls and women—his novel does find value in the socializing mechanism of the school, and particularly in the figure of the male schoolteacher as a catalyst for the socio-sexual awakening of pubescent female students, and their resulting maturation toward socially-prescribed sex roles. Adding to the organizing principles that science and medicine had already contributed to education in general and female education in particular, Holmes’s novel brought into public view the idea that adolescent females could be further categorized according to how well their individual physiologies and psychologies would allow them to conform, as they aged, to culturally-approved models of femininity. He delineated a spectrum of female bodies and behaviors ranging from normal to abnormal, and relied on cutting edge science—especially Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, published simultaneously with his text—to imply that most girls could be moved along that spectrum, toward proper femininity, through the influence of their male teachers. Holmes’s text is tentative and subtle on these points: He did not intend to produce a tract either for or against female education. Nevertheless, it is possible to tease out of his bizarre novel Holmes’s deep engagement with the educational theories of his day, and to observe how his innovative contributions here anticipated and influenced a bevy of later, better-known works such as Edward H. Clarke’s *Sex in Education* (1874) and S. Weir Mitchell’s *Doctor and Patient*

(1888), which delineated ever more sharply the qualities of abnormal femininity and their relationship to education. In subsequent sections of this chapter I trace Holmes's engagement with female education in *Elsie Venner*, focusing on his interest in classifying and pathologizing a wide range of adolescent females, identifying biological imperatives to justify, scientifically, the Cult of True Womanhood, and applying Darwin's theories of Natural and Sexual Selection to the concept of sex-role socialization for girls at school.

Later in the chapter, I explain Holmes's stake in female education, not immediately apparent to most students of nineteenth-century American culture, who know him primarily as a doctor, poet (especially of "Old Ironsides"), and essayist. Finally, I return to Holmes's novel to examine how the education of his central character reflects his extreme ambivalence toward females who do not conform to the prevailing model of femininity, and to suggest the implications of his work for the writers and cultures he influenced. First, though, it is useful to examine briefly how doctors, scientists, and educators conceived of the development of *all* children, from infancy to pubescence, since each life stage is to some degree determined by the previous one, and since adolescent females, in particular, were expected not only to navigate these life stages but understand them in order to prepare for bearing and raising their own children.

Medico-Educational Theories of Childhood Development at Mid-Century

Children from birth to age six, included in the first life stage, were considered to be constitutionally delicate (and, according to recently adopted religious doctrine, innately good); therefore, they came to be perceived as extremely vulnerable to

corrupting influences and mental strain. Dr. Amariah Brigham's influential *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement Upon Health* (1832) typified physicians' warnings against strenuous mental exertion, claiming that the brains and central nervous systems of young people would become diseased—perhaps fatally—if taxed with studying subjects beyond their capabilities (8). Of the various systems of educating children in America, Brigham writes, “they must all...be wrong...[if] they do not conform to the requirements of the laws of nature, and wait for organs to be developed before they are tasked” (21). Such beliefs, along with the Lockean view that the very young child was a *tabula rasa* or “blank slate,” suggested to social reformers from Bronson Alcott to Lydia Childs, Jacob Abbott, Thomas Gallaudet, and George Combe that such children should be supervised in what were called “infant” schools, where instruction in basic literacy, writing, arithmetic, and the Bible would nurture them morally and intellectually without overtaxing their delicate minds and bodies (Kett, *Rites* 124; Boylan 155). Infant education emphasized the moral and physical simplicity of a young child’s female-dominated learning environment; infant schools, furthermore, tried to mimic or reproduce the idealized home lives of middle-class children whose mothers or female guardians would remain with them at home while male adults worked outside of that space.

Children aged six to twelve, on the other hand, were understood to require a more rigorous school environment which would offer broader opportunities for peer socialization, weaken the intensity of the child’s reliance on adults, and strengthen self-confidence. The common school was “smaller, more protected, and more controllable

than the marketplace, the street, or field, but larger than the immediate circles of parents, ministers, and playmates,” and was therefore considered ideal for helping children to lose some of their earlier dependence on parents and guardians (Finkelstein “Casting” 131).

At school they would begin to learn the self-reliance that adult life would require, and to form social and emotional bonds with their peers, whose characteristic goodness would make such affiliations benign, even beneficial. Monitorial or “mutual instruction” schools, inspired by Pestalozzi and Lancaster, altered children’s associations with one another such that students who formerly engaged equally in play activities and other forms of non-structured socialization now acted as proxies for their teachers in a highly rigid hierarchical system.⁵ Select student “monitors” who had mastered certain academic content more quickly than his or her peers were charged with teaching that content to the rest of the class; they also maintained the authority to award merits or demerits for good or poor performance (“A Manual of the System of Monitorial or Mutual Instruction” 341). When discipline was necessary—say, as a result of those demerits—teachers would punish children by withholding affection and reward them by bestowing it, a tactic of moral suasion that was quickly replacing the practices of shaming and corporal

⁵ Pestalozzi and Lancaster were first popularized in the United States in the 1820s; however, the rigidity of their methods soon brought them into disfavor and the trend waned by the mid-1830s. Parkerson and Parkerson have suggested that the population increase I have noted above in the northeast is partly responsible for their renewed popularity; too, the influence of science upon these strategies in the 1840s and 50s helped vindicate their use for a new generation of students (*Transitions in American Education* 99). These pedagogical methods would continue to wane and wax, and be retooled, throughout the nineteenth century, and Pestalozzi in particular continues to enjoy a profound influence on current early education methods in America. See also Woody v.1, 531.

punishment (Goshgarian 39; Parkerson and Parkerson 152). Moreover, it was theorized that children would learn to internalize moral restraint by reading instructive tales, and by checking their own behavior against the actions of their classmates (Kett, *Rites* 113). Though supervised by adult guardians, young people of both genders would exert a great deal of influence upon one another in lessons both academic and social (Goshgarian 36).

The perception that young people would benevolently influence one another did not extend to the next life stage, however, when, between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, both sexes entered and endured the throes of puberty, that “most dangerous time of life that needed careful watching” (Kett, *Rites* 135). Indeed, a “pedagogy of surveillance” formed a key link between *teaching* adolescents and *treating* what was widely perceived as the “crisis” of their budding sexual maturity and rapid physical growth (Goshgarian 36). Parents and teachers were admonished to “watch over, guard, and restrain” the adolescents in their charge, keeping an eye out for sexual transgressions such as masturbation (“self-abuse”) and flirtatiousness, and even using “observational journals” that recorded the efficacy of these surveillance methods (Bostwick 184, qtd. in Goshgarian 39; Boylan 163). Catherine Beecher’s 1841 *Treatise on Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School*, to name one highly popular example—it was reprinted almost every year for the next fifteen years—thus warned mothers (and mothers-in-training) to be watchful over pubescent children who, “in solitude, and without being aware of the sin or danger...may inflict evils on themselves, which not infrequently terminate in disease, delirium, and death” (233). Similar admonitions were delivered in such popular texts as Sylvester Graham’s *Lecture to*

Young Men on Chastity (1837), and William Alcott's *The Young Man's Guide* (1833), *The Young Wife* (1844), and *Physiology of Marriage* (1866). Of course, anxieties over youthful sexuality were not new to the 1840s and 50s: John Demos explains that Cotton Mather's *The Pure Nazarite* (1723), a religious tract explicitly denouncing the sin of masturbation, initiated a popular "new genre of sermon devoted entirely to the topic" (152). What is different about texts such as Beecher's is the way in which religious concerns merge with scientific ones, to produce admonitions against masturbation that speak equally of sin against God *and* sin against one's body and health. Thus, Beecher writes about masturbation as "evil," a "sin" that brings not only spiritually damning but physically damning consequences, as well. Even doctors of divinity—perhaps eager to maintain moral authority by infusing religion with science—wrote educational tracts emphasizing the need to regulate strictly the adolescent's physical and spiritual health: "Almost every affliction of the body, as well as of the mind, arises from the fact that we refuse to obey law," wrote Reverend John Todd in another popular text, *The Daughter at School* (1854):

God has given the ten commandments for the welfare of human society, and no one can be universally violated without destroying society, and no one can be partially violated without injuring society just in proportion as it is violated. So he has given laws for the body, —not spoken, indeed, on Sinai, but written on the body, —laws which cannot be violated without injuring the health. These laws often clash with our wishes and habits, but they are inexorable (163).

It was hoped that constant surveillance by adult authorities would cause the adolescent to internalize the disapproval of his or her elders, and eventually lead to the self-policing of his or her own undesirable behaviors. More immediate and aggressive approaches advocated by science and medical professionals, however called for placing a physical buffer between boys and girls, whose increasingly obvious sexual differences and mutual attraction could pose a distraction to learning and a threat to chaste behavior. Male and female students were thus often segregated at puberty into separate classrooms and, in many cases, separate schools, which mirrored the notion of distinct gender spheres that males and females were ideally expected to inhabit as adults.

Of course, for a variety of reasons, adolescent females remained worrisome to those in the medical field, even while they were segregated from boys. For one thing, their imminent reproductive maturity, ripening sexual interest, and increased bodily-ness were at odds with the period's burgeoning ideals of adult True Womanhood, which was often represented as maternal yet passionless, disembodied yet physically infirm. One can imagine how, in contrast to the True Womanhood ideal, such physical changes as the onset of menstruation—more apparent now that girls were frequently concentrated by age into a single grade and classroom, rather than dispersed throughout a school—would have acutely demonstrated adolescent girls' physical natures, their reproductive power, sexual purpose, and physiological “destiny.” As Diane Price Herndl has argued, girls who maintained their health and vigor throughout this developmental stage posed a threat to many (male) doctors who were “seeking to improve their economic and professional standing [by] asserting women’s weakness and innate unhealthiness” (22). Such doctors

would come to portray menstruation as both a blessing and a curse: that is, while the reproductive functioning of the ovaries and uterus provided welcome physiological proof that a girl was ready to take on the weighty responsibilities of wife- and motherhood, menarche also marked the beginning of her susceptibility to a variety of illnesses, most especially hysteria, a disorder marked by “emotional indulgence, moral weakness, [and] lack of will power” that would be exacerbated by the duties of parenting and homemaking (Smith-Rosenberg “Hysterical Woman,” 669-71). Thus, whatever social leverage might have been gained from being a young female at the peak of her sexual vitality was just as quickly lost again as a result of the same physiological development.⁶

⁶ A wonderful little poem at the end of Mary Davenant’s 1850 short story, “Fanny’s Fine Education,” complains that young girls fashioned for ornamental wifehood at school are nothing more than “genteely got up marionettes,” and implies that schooling has affected their insides: “Yes! Puppet’s the word; for there’s nothing inside/ But a clock-work of vanity, fashion and pride!/ Puppets warranted sound, that without any falter/ When wound up will go—just as far as the altar;/ But when once the cap’s donned with the matronly border,/ Lo! The quiet machine goes at once out of order” (445). The poem is quoted in Brackett, 34; the short story can be read in its entirety in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* XVII no. CX, September 1850.

Later in the century, educator Anna Brackett would note that many American girls were quite conscious of this loss of social leverage, and responded to it with resistance and subversion. Regular admonitions from doctors that puberty is “necessarily a period of great physical and mental disturbance,” she wrote, only served to make girls afraid of their impending adulthood, and resistant to its required roles and behaviors (*The Education of American Girls* 54). While American females have “common sense enough,” she went on, to accept inevitable changes in their bodies and their roles, they also have common sense enough to “fight against, and to conquer, what is not inevitable, provided it is not desirable [to them]” (54). As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued, one way in which females fought against undesirable roles of wife- and motherhood was to purposely *adopt* hysterical behaviors, for which rest and a total cessation of domestic duties were often prescribed (669-71).

Female education was early influenced by these clinical estimations and expectations of pubescent female health, especially by the subsequent medical prejudice against female intellectualism that developed in the 1840s and 50s and gained momentum as the century advanced. Although the model of True Womanhood suggested that maturing females would naturally develop wifely (reproductive) and maternal (nurturing) instincts, it was also a view widely disseminated by well-known doctors such as Charles Meigs that those instincts could easily be warped by either internal or external factors. A maturing female had to be monitored carefully because of “the strange and secret influences which her organs, by their nervous constitution, and their functions, by their relation to her whole Life-force, whether in sickness or in health, are capable of exerting, not on the body alone, but on the heart, the mind, and the very soul of woman” (*Lectures on Some of the Distinctive Characteristics of the Female* 6). The notion that female reproductive organs were inherently nervous, and that, from their enfeebled disposition they controlled the rest of the female body, mind, and soul, suggested that a girl could derail her own health simply by *developing*. Any number of other, outside influences—but especially intellectual work—would only increase the likelihood of debility and deformity. As Meigs asserted in 1847, “it is not woman’s province, nature, power, or mission” to “develop” “strong idea[s]” “in the tender soil of her intellect”; moreover, the “certain women” who do possess “male powers” of intellect are “monsters...things out of, or beyond the common course of nature” (*Lectures* 9-11). Thus, concerns that had been expressed in the 1810s, 20s, and 30s about the ways in which education would pervert girls’ abilities to be good sisters, daughters, mothers, and wives

mingled with newer worries, in the 1840s and 50s, about the ways in which intellectual endeavor might degrade their maturing bodies, compromise their abilities to reproduce, or otherwise divert females from the cardinal virtues of femininity—piety, purity, submissiveness, domesticity, and passionlessness. Where a typical argument against female education had previously contended that girls who “devote their lives to study...throw off the female *character*,” science-minded critics of female education began in the 1840s and 50s to posit that girls who studied would also “throw off” the female *sex* and become masculine, barren, hysterical, nymphomaniacal, or freakish (Burton 168, my emphasis).

In response to such arguments, proponents of female education were compelled to adjust their approaches to girls’ schooling so that the lessons and skills they imparted would facilitate the development of the future wife and mother, and not be at odds with the purported physical needs and limitations of budding True Women. Many conservative educators embraced as a middle-ground the approach that had been endorsed almost a century earlier in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s controversial and quasi-scientific philosophical novel, *Émile, or On Education* (1762), which celebrated adolescence as a delicate period of natural and necessary sexual awakening for both males and females, and recommended that education allow boys (who are “active and strong”) and girls (who are “passive and weak”) to develop as the sexual partners God intended them to be (358). Rousseau claims that, because females were created as the sexual counterparts of males, female education should focus on eliciting the natural sexual allure of young girls, teaching them to cultivate their “charms,” arouse male

desire, strategically resist premature mating advances in order to provoke more vigorous arousal in the strongest of suitors, and eventually, once the best suitor is identified, become passive and timid to encourage the male's advances (preferably through marriage) and finally allow sexual congress and reproduction. "The Supreme Being wanted to do honor to the human species," he wrote; "While abandoning woman to unlimited desires He joins modesty to these desires in order to constrain them. All this, it seems to me, is worth more than the instinct of beasts" (Rousseau 359). Of course, Rousseau's radical suggestion that woman had unlimited sexual desires threatened to undermine the concept of True Womanhood and its attendant ideas that females were "naturally" pure or asexual, and "passionless." At the same time, however, it shared with that concept an assumption that adult females are not sexually aggressive but, by God's design, submissive and malleable, traits which serve to increase their dependency upon men. As historian Keith Melder has put it, Rousseau's work lent credence to the idea that educational institutions "had a role in character formation to smooth nature's way, in easing the girl's passage from an unsure childhood to an assured feminine maturity and domesticity" by fostering both her sense of having a sexual purpose and her sense of "modesty and shame" about her sexual feelings (25). Schoolteachers could perform the crucial function that Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has described as "social gynecology," funneling girls' pubescent, "animal" physicality and interest in sex into a socially acceptable interest in courtship, mating, Christian motherhood, and domesticity ("Female Animal" 352). They would shepherd girls from *physiological* puberty, or the stage of

being physically prepared for reproduction, to *social* puberty, or the more mature stage of being socially ready, as well, for wifehood, motherhood, and True Womanhood.

The Girls' School as Medical Theater in *Elsie Venner*

Holmes's *Elsie Venner* proposes just such an agenda. The novel features a strikingly beautiful, wealthy, motherless, and "wild" adolescent schoolgirl, the title character, whose primitive, bestial characteristics outstrip her civilized traits, and whose unconventional behavior makes her an outcast in her small society of Rockland, Maine in the 1840s and 50s. The narrative centers around the complex relationship that develops between Elsie and one Bernard Langdon, a young doctor-in-training who has temporarily abandoned his medical studies in Boston in order to teach and thus raise funds to support the remainder of his professional education. Bernard's search for employment brings him to Rockland's Apollinean Female Institute, where Elsie is enrolled.

Of course, Elsie is not Bernard's only student. According to the novel's unnamed narrator—Bernard's medical school professor, with whom he corresponds by mail—the Institute serves "a hundred young lady scholars," each of whom is perceived as needing assistance crossing the threshold from girlhood to womanhood. Among this hundred, the narrator claims, there were

girls of all ages, little creatures, some pallid and delicate-looking, the offspring of invalid parents,—much given to books, not much to mischief, commonly spoken of as particularly good children, and contrasted with another sort, girls of more vigorous organization, who were disposed to laughing and play, and required a

strong hand to manage them; —then young growing misses of every shade of Saxon complexion, and here and there one of more Southern hue: blondes, some of them...brunettes, some...with that swarthy hue which often carries with it a heavily-shaded lip....With these were to be seen at intervals some of maturer years, full-blown flowers among the opening buds, with that conscious look upon their faces which so many women wear during the period when they never meet a single man without having his monosyllable ready for him —tied as they are, poor things! on the rock of expectation, each of them an Andromeda waiting for her Perseus (47-51).

Thus described, the Institute serves as a context in which Bernard can scrutinize all of these young girls, measure them against one another, especially physiologically, and contrast them with regard to health, strength, maturity, and “consciousness” about their relationship to men as potential brides (i.e., we may presume the monosyllable is “yes,” as in, “I will marry you”). His relationship to these students will include imparting appropriately feminine academic subjects—Bernard teaches poetry, not science—as well as serving as a kind of practice beau, a Perseus to their Andromeda. According to the myth, Andromeda is offered as a sacrifice to a sea serpent—a phallic, snake-like creature that, as a symbol both of untamed male *and* female sexuality, gets a lot of play in this novel—but she is saved by and then married to Perseus, who beheads the serpent and thus figuratively eradicates unbridled sexual desire. The suggestion here that each student (from “little creatures” to “growing misses” to “full-blown flowers”) anticipates marriage as an answer to potentially perilous, untamed sexuality corresponds with the narrator’s

declaration, later in the novel, that the Institute is performing a crucial “task” in the “new social order” by preparing its students to be wives of “American-born men, any one of whom may be President of these United States. Any one of these girls may be a four-years’ queen” (172). Thus, the school’s primary function is to prepare young females of all different physiological constitutions to become marriageable young ladies, potential *First Ladies*, suitable mates, then, for the most ideal of American suitors—men who, presumably, will have also succeeded in sublimating their own sexual urges to the more selfless pursuits of civil service and nation building.

As the narrator acknowledges, some of the hundred Institute scholars are harder to manage than others; however, Elsie is by far the Institute’s most unruly student: her physiological and social development appear compromised by a number of forces which threaten her ability to make the crucial transition from girlhood to womanhood. Seventeen years of age at the start of the novel, Elsie rejects every aspect of proper femininity that she is supposed to embrace: “her temper was singular, her tastes were anomalous, her habits were lawless, her antipathies were many and intense, and she was liable to explosions of ungovernable anger” (192). She is non-domestic, asocial, and apparently reluctant to worship at church; in addition, she “shuns all the other girls,” preferring instead, to wander the town’s mountain wilderness alone, undeterred by the dangerous rattlesnakes that infest the area (212). Whereas these qualities seem to diminish Elsie’s femininity—she is by turns masculinized by her fearlessness and unsexed by her irreligiosity—still other qualities paradoxically suggest her hyperfemininity. Elsie is, for example, what we might today call an “early bloomer,”

physically mature, sexually provocative, and more emotionally passionate than one might expect from a girl her age. Her precocity is linked, at various points in the novel, to her Portuguese heritage (on her deceased mother's side), her profound ties to her African servant and surrogate mother, Sophy (figured throughout the novel as a descendant of primitives and cannibals), and a kind of hysteria associated with the onset of puberty (150, 179, 194). As a result of her unpredictable pubescent impulses, she is feared and loathed by many of her townsfolk, who struggle particularly to reconcile her apparent physical "magnificence" with her perverse resistance to "normal" femininity. Indeed, despite her wealth and beauty, Elsie is unanimously considered unmarriageable: her father asks himself, "Who would *dare* to marry Elsie?"; her classmates think she is a "man-hater," and her female teacher, Miss Helen Darley, fears that Elsie may have been "born so out of parallel with the lines of natural law that nothing short of a miracle can bring [her] right" (192, 197, 74). Even her cousin Dick Venner—a scoundrel, and the only character in the novel who seriously considers Elsie as a potential wife (because he wants a cut of her inheritance)—suspects that she would probably attempt to kill him in one of her inevitable fits of rage (262-4; 268-9). Many in Rockland—including the town's own Dr. Kittredge—even believe that Elsie's perplexing behaviors may stem from her having absorbed some traits of the rattlesnake that bit her mother while Elsie was still *in utero*. (This bite is, in fact, what killed Elsie's mother shortly after she gave birth (445).) As a result of her independence and willfulness, Elsie remains uncontrolled by those few adults who are charged with cultivating her mental, physical, and emotional growth. She is permitted to grow up virtually unsupervised and unsocialized and is, at the

start of the novel, a “wild creature” who “ordered everybody and was ordered by none” (277).

Before Bernard’s arrival, Holmes indicates, the Apollinean Institute is not quite up to the task of converting its young charges into potential First Ladies, and is especially ill-equipped to deal with the intensive challenges Elsie presents. Hindered by its distance from any modern metropolitan center—particularly from Boston, “the Hub,” Holmes would say, of civilization and medicine—the school is a chaotic and backwards organization, isolated from the influences of current scientific theories and therefore plagued by many of the institutional problems I enumerated at the beginning of this chapter. For instance, rather than organizing the institute into grades (as was customary by the 1850s), the owner, Silas Peckham, “kept [the] young ladies’ school exactly as he would have kept a hundred head of cattle,—for the simple, unadorned purpose of making just as much money in just as few years as could be safely done,” and packing the classrooms full of female students of different ages and abilities (48). As a result, the “miserable” and “frail” Helen Darley is overworked and overwhelmed; one of those superfluous women who seems destined never to marry, she “had bartered away the life of her youth...breath[ing] in the hot air of schoolrooms,” and is thus always on the verge of a physical or emotional breakdown (69, 124). The consequences of the school’s mismanagement are experienced also by the students whose instructors, like those we observed in Cassandra Morgeson’s first school in Surrey, possess insufficient knowledge of their subjects and poor pedagogical and disciplinary skills (49). Many of the girls attend irregularly, and most turn out uninspired academic work when they *do* attend;

some students have even been so tempted to challenge the authority of the school as to steal or attempt arson (71, 76). Elsie—whom Dr. Kittredge has predicted might “take to some of the girls or teachers” at school, which might in turn “set her [proper female] nature at work...for love would be more like to bring her right than anything else”—proves too strong a personality to be loved by her peers, managed by the likes of Miss Darley, or by any means brought into the fold of True Womanhood (195-6).

Upon the arrival of Bernard Langdon, however, Holmes hints that a solution to Elsie’s (and the school’s) problems may eventually be found. As a “man of science” trained in the city, Bernard possesses “uncommon sense” and a “finer perception” than the Rockland natives, two key traits that can help him interpret and look beyond the “demonstrable facts of physics and physiology” to “explore...behind the scenes which make up...the show which is called Nature,” and thus to “solve the problem of Elsie’s influence to attract and repel those around her” (396-7). Although he is still a student himself, Bernard is introduced to us as a man fully identified with his impending role as a doctor. On his first day at the Institute, for example, he classifies each arriving schoolgirl he observes as though she were a medical patient:

Hannah Martin. Fourteen years and three months old. Short-necked, thick-waisted, round-cheeked, smooth, vacant forehead, large, dull eyes. Looks good-natured, with little other expression....*Rosa Milburn.* Sixteen. Brunette, with a rareripe flush in her cheeks. Color comes and goes easily. Eyes wandering, apt to be downcast. Moody at times. Said to be passionate, if irritated. Finished in high relief. Carries shoulders well back and walks well, as if proud of her woman’s

life...but seems restless, —a hard girl to look after....*Charlotte Ann Wood.*

Fifteen....Long, light ringlets, pallid complexion, blue eyes. Delicate child, half unfolded. Gentle, but languid and despondent....Undervitalized..... (76-77)

Bernard's attention to the girls' ages, physical comportment, and emotional propensities demonstrate his ability to read outward signs and divine their corresponding internal meaning, to taxonomize and classify the adolescent girls according to science's understanding of True Womanhood's physiological characteristics: submissive "good nature" is expressed in one girl's "smooth, vacant forehead" and another's "pallid complexion," for example, whereas intractability is observed in a third's "proud" posture, "restless carriage," and flushed cheeks. Though Elsie proves more difficult to categorize—when he first sees her, Bernard wonders aloud, "And who and what is that?"—his tendency is not to accept as true the rumors that Elsie is "insane" or "evil," or that she had inherited serpentine qualities as a result of "pre-natal poisoning" from her mother's fatal snakebite (219); "His professional training had made him slow to accept marvellous [sic] stories and many forms of superstition, [and] he was disposed...not to accept the thought of any odious personal relationship" between her and the snake that bit and killed her mother (398-9). Instead, Bernard becomes "convinced" that, though she "had something of the feral nature....whatever alien impulse swayed her will and modulated or diverted or displaced her affections came [rather] from some impression that reached *far back* into the past....that she had brought her ruling tendency, whatever it was, into the world with her" "vigorous womanhood," like a "clouded streak seam[ing] the white marble of a perfect statue" (398-9, my emphasis). Indeed, Bernard's scientific

perspective helps him convert the girls' school into a kind of medical theater or observatory, and restore to the Institute the spirit of its namesake, Apollo, a deity associated with masculinity, patriarchy, medicine, order, harmony, and civilization.

The Good Doctor: Science, Sex, and Pedagogy

The figuration of Bernard Langdon as Apollo incarnate has another significance, as well, for in the legend Apollo slays the massive snake, Python, just as Perseus slays the sea-serpent. (Bernard, meanwhile, keeps a rattlesnake caged in his study while he teaches at the Institute, aiming to study its powers of "fascinating" or hypnotizing prey and to see how they compare with Elsie's own magnetism (207-10).) Both killings symbolize the subduing of their own raw sexuality by powerful, heroic men via their intellect (for it takes some cunning to lure and trap each beast), the physical strength of their bodies, and willful self-control. So, too, will Bernard's efficacy in taming the pubescent sexuality of his female students depend not only on his scientific mind but also on his attractive physical body, his ability to resist the sexual appeal of his students, and his more general exemplariness as a male specimen:

Anybody might see what would happen, with a good-looking, well-dressed, well-bred young man, who had the authority of a master, it is true, but the manners of a friend and equal, moving about among these young girls day after day, his eyes meeting theirs, his breath mingling with theirs, his voice growing familiar to them, never in any harsh tones, often soothing, encouraging, always sympathetic, with its male depth and breadth of sound among the chorus of trebles, as if it were

a river in which a hundred of these little piping streamlets might lose themselves; anybody might see what would happen. Young girls wrote home to their parents that they enjoyed themselves much, this term, at the Institute, and thought they were making rapid progress in their studies. There was a great enthusiasm for the young master's reading-classes in English poetry. Some of the poor little things began to adorn themselves with an extra ribbon, or a bit of such jewelry as they had before kept for special occasions. Dear souls! they only half knew what they were doing it for. Does the bird know why its feathers grow more brilliant and its voice becomes musical in the pairing season? (175; cf. 231)

Without their realizing it, and without any conscious effort on Bernard's part, the girls automatically respond to their teacher's natural sexual allure (adorning themselves with ribbons and jewels to catch his eye), suggesting that education is best and most easily conducted according to Nature's plan. Most of the students are nearly hypnotized into obedience by Bernard's soothing voice, frequent eye contact, and tantalizing physical nearness. The girls' obedience springs entirely from their sexual and romantic attraction to their teacher, whose first name, incidentally, means "sturdy bear," and whose last means "enclosed town," signifying Bernard's position as Rockland's resident hunk; they flow to him the way that streamlets flow to larger bodies of water, and long to "lose themselves" in him, a phrase that points toward anticipated sexual ecstasy as much as it does to nineteenth-century married life, in which women's identities were absorbed into their husbands' own.

Meanwhile, Bernard remains “distracted” by the sheer number of girls in his care and yet naturally “self possessed” enough to resist them, writing to his medical school classmate, “I always want to give a little love to all the poor things that cannot have a whole man to themselves. If they would only be contented with a little!” (50, 231). (Over the course of the novel, he will be tempted several times by various girls, and will ultimately end up betrothed to Letitia Forrester, a “thorough-bred schoolgirl” “fit to be a Crown Prince’s partner,” however he never engages in any untoward behavior with his students (304-5).) Thus, the “good-looking, well-dressed, well-bred” Bernard brings order to his classroom not only indirectly, through his knowledge of science and nature, but also through his inadvertent ability to elicit a sexual response in his young students while remaining relatively detached from (if not impervious to) their own charms. Of course, just as Elsie proves difficult for Bernard to categorize, she may also be harder to tame than most Institute students, and harder for Bernard to resist: No “piping little streamlet,” Elsie exudes a “counter-charm” to Bernard’s powerful magnetism, the intensity of which rivals his own (105). However, by likening Bernard to Apollo and Perseus, Holmes implies that his idealized maleness may be potent enough to overpower and convert even this most contrary female student. This reading certainly squares with Dr. Kittredge’s advice, above, that love would set Elsie’s nature at work. Under the influence of an intelligent, handsome, eligible bachelor in particular, she will, like her classmates, become simultaneously more bestial and mating-driven (like birds in the pairing season) and more cultivated, increasingly conforming to socially-prescribed

models for proper femininity, and acquiescing to Bernard's masterly (but gentle) authority.

The influence that Holmes describes here was a quite common pedagogical mode, though not one that had yet been explicitly theorized in the pedagogical literature of the 1850s, in which students learn to conform to adult sex role behaviors when they are taught by members of the opposite sex. Deborah Fitts and Barbara Finkelstein have each located short stories and memoirs about boys' education during this period, which frequently depict male students responding differently to male teachers (with whom they are generally competitive and belligerent) than to female teachers (under whose influence they become, automatically, mild and protective) (144-45; "Pedagogy as Intrusion" 247). Moreover, G.M. Goshgarian has found evidence that a female's "acquaintance with the opposite sex" in puberty was expected to "easily arouse the 'dormant passion'"...and "exercise a potent influence on the female organization," such that her emotional and physiological states could mature successfully together into adult womanhood (King, *Woman: Her Diseases and Their Treatment* (1858) and Johnson, *An Essay on the Diseases of Young Women* (1849), qtd. in Goshgarian 60). Related to the concept of disciplining through love, which, as I noted earlier, *had* been explicitly theorized in the pedagogical literature, the teachers in these scenarios are effective to the degree that their disapproval of student behavior is registered as an emotional rejection by a member of the opposite sex, while their approval is registered as an emotional acceptance (Goshgarian 39).

To these teaching models Holmes adds the power and authority of science. As is hinted in the above passages—which compare human society to the animal kingdom and suggest that Bernard Langdon is an ideal mate for whose attention his young students eagerly compete by “adorning themselves with extra ribbon” and jewels—Holmes’s novel was enormously influenced by Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, also published in 1859, which introduced the revolutionary theories of Sexual and Natural Selection and reanimated the work of Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (specifically, his 1801 *Theory of Acquired Characteristics*) and Herbert Spencer (especially his 1852 *Development Hypothesis* and his 1860 *Synthetic Philosophy*). As we have already seen, Bernard’s powerful magnetism—his ability to attract the girls and make them compete for his attention—is an excellent illustration of the principle of Sexual Selection, for example, in which “a struggle [ensues] between the individuals of one sex...for the possession of the other sex” (Darwin 60). Darwin’s more complex theory of Natural Selection, moreover—the incremental process by which inherited traits are maintained in, modified in, or eliminated from each species—is also suggested in Bernard’s thought that whatever influence had “modulated or diverted or displaced” Elsie’s feminine warmth was inherited from some distant source in her lineage, and that, through “common influences” she might be further modulated (Darwin 50; 398-9). As Darwin acknowledges, human societies have always adopted Nature’s “Survival of the Fittest” model by favoring certain traits and discouraging others (50). The school, Holmes argues, is one of society’s most powerful mechanisms for enacting this model with respect to young females,

because it will teach future wives and mothers the behaviors they will, in turn, pass on to their own children.

While the above passages only implicitly reference Darwin's work, however, other moments in the novel refer to Darwin explicitly, as when the narrator advises that, when girls are being prepared for their role in the social world—as they are by Bernard, at school—they must be made to understand that they are in competition with other females to attract the best mate, and that

there are dozens, scores, hundreds, with whom [they] must be weighed in the balance....[They] have got to learn that the “struggle for life” Mr. Charles Darwin talks about reaches to vertebrates clad in crinoline, as well as to mollusks in shells, or articulates in jointed scales, or anything that fights for breathing-room and food and love in any coat of fur or feather! (94)

In other words, in order to succeed *socially*—a benchmark evidenced by her catching the “fittest” mate (and provider of “breathing-room, and food” and, significantly, both human, emotional and bestial, sexual “love”)—the professor contends that each girl must compete with her peers to best display those qualities most favored by *Nature*. Though Bernard does not consciously choose to magnify his role in this competitive process, the professor's pronouncement signals to the reader that Bernard already *is* a part of it, and that his position as a girls' schoolteacher automatically amplifies his role, allowing him to routinely influence a large number of pubescent female students such that they become aware of their place in the natural and social order.

Thus, Holmes echoes the beliefs of many of his contemporaries—that all pubescent girls are potentially resistant to the dictates of True Womanhood; and that puberty is, by definition, a delicate crisis during which young girls' minds and bodies are constantly in danger of being overtaken and deformed along the way to adulthood—and suggests that the girls' school, if properly administrated, can help balance and regulate the tension between the young female mind and body, identify those females who are unbalanced (and how that balance is manifested), and even rebalance those females in whom this equilibrium has been upset. Indeed, through Bernard's interactions with his students, the school is implicitly presented as *the* place best suited for the social and scientific shaping of young girls into True Women. The girls who are "fittest" can be trained to attract suitable mates and produce healthy children for the good of the country. Those who have trouble making the transition from girlhood to healthy adult womanhood are "slight obliquities," as Bernard calls them, who may nevertheless be rescued by "common influences" within the context of the educational institution (74). Those who are unfit, however—the *severe* obliquities or "right-angle cases"—will need to be whisked away to "penitentiaries" or "insane asylums," or may suffer some worse fate (74). The girls' schoolteacher, ideally armed with the most advanced scientific theory of the day, can help to distinguish between these three types of girls (the "fittest," the "slight obliquities," and the "right-angle cases"), and can employ those "common influences" Holmes never specifies—but which I will argue consists mainly of Bernard's masculine sex appeal—in order to set right the females who are slightly off Nature's course. Well before anyone would so name it, Holmes engages in a kind of *social* Darwinism, the

theory that human beings should engineer their social environments to favor the survival of the strong and the elimination of the weak or unfit, specifically by selectively introducing sexually appealing males into the adolescent female environment.

Dr. Holmes and the Construction of Femininity

Clearly, Holmes did not deliberately or consciously compose his novel as a treatise on the relationship between science and female education. In fact, he proclaimed in two of the novel's three Prefaces (written in 1861, 1883 and 1891) that he wrote *Elsie Venner* as a challenge to Calvinist doctrines of original sin. Asserting that "the real aim" and "only use of the story is to bring the dogmas of inherited guilt and its consequences into a clearer point of view," he argued that Elsie should not be judged as "evil" simply because she inherited undesirable moral qualities from her ancestors (ix, xii).⁷ Nevertheless, Holmes was also deeply interested in defining the physical and psychical parameters of normative and abnormal femininity, and his efforts to do so form a recurring theme in *Elsie Venner* and Holmes's larger career as doctor, educator, and author.

⁷ Numerous biographers concur that Holmes's anti-Calvinist sentiments were a major motivating force in his life and his literary work. Lifelong friend Harriet Beecher Stowe, to cite one example, wrote to Holmes as the novel was being serialized that the story "is of deeper and broader interest than anything you have done yet....The foundations of moral responsibility, the interlacing laws of nature and spirit, and their relations to us here and hereafter, are topics which I ponder more and more." Eighteen years later she would write in a letter to Holmes that "my daughters and I have been reading 'Elsie Venner' again...all your theology in that book I subscribe to with both hands" (cited in Fields, 289 and 373, respectively).

In fact, in the broad nineteenth-century movement to bring science and medicine to bear on female education, Holmes was not merely an adherent but a chief and early architect, influencing many of his medical colleagues—including his former teacher, Edward H. Clarke and his friend, S. Weir Mitchell, two men who would, later in the century, profoundly influence educational policies affecting girls and women—in their conceptualization of female health and illness. Biographer E. M. Tilton notes that, beginning in the early 1840s when Holmes was first starting out as a doctor, his medical casebooks in several places describe pointedly “the shy, consumptive girls—the New England type—reluctant to submit to [medical] examination...whom Holmes constantly uses as an example” in his works (163). In the later 1840s, Miriam Small further attests, Holmes’s interest in defining female capabilities and restricting the female sphere took a more striking turn when, as Professor of Anatomy (1847-1870) and Dean of Harvard Medical School (1847-1850), he advised that most females were better suited to be nurses than doctors, since the rigors of scientific study were above the ken of most women’s intellectual and physical abilities.⁸ By 1860, Dr. Holmes was lecturing to his male students that females are not only intellectually inferior to males, but are, by nature, physically infirm:

⁸ Although Holmes had himself studied medicine under a female doctor in Paris, and had even lobbied on behalf of Harriet K. Hunt for admission to Harvard’s medical lectures in 1847 and 1850, his arguments in favor of female medical education were lukewarm, at best: Holmes ceased to champion Hunt’s cause when students protested that they would leave the school rather than study beside a female; he similarly backed down from supporting the admission of several black petitioners to Harvard Medical School—including Martin Delany, Daniel Laing, and Isaac Snowden—when students protested again. See Nora Nercessian’s *Worthy of the Honor* and Peter Gibian’s *Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Culture of Conversation*.

Invalidism is the normal state of many [female] organizations. It can be changed to disease, but never to absolute health by medicinal appliances. There are many ladies, ancient and recent, who are perpetually taking remedies for irremediable pains and aches. They *ought* to have headaches and back-aches and stomach-aches; they are not well if they do not have them. To expect them to live without frequent twinges is like expecting a doctor's old chaise to go without creaking; if it did we might be sure that the springs were broken ("Currents and Cross-Currents" 200, emphasis in original).

Thus, thirteen years before Clarke would publish his enormously influential *Sex in Education* (to which I will return later), and nearly three decades before Mitchell (the father of the "rest cure") would famously exclaim that "the man who does not know sick women does not know women," Holmes began to teach his own medical students at Harvard that *all* normal femininity was, by definition, infirm (Mitchell *Doctor and Patient*, 10). Women were not to be considered well unless they were ill.

Holmes aired his opinions on the subject of female health not solely before a medical audience, but a lay one, as well. From December 1859 through December 1860, at the same time that he was writing the medical lecture cited above, *Elsie Venner* was published serially as "The Professor's Story" in the *Atlantic Monthly*—a magazine that Holmes had helped found in 1857, alongside Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, John Lothrop Motley, J. Elliott Cabot, and the publishing firm of Philips, Sampson & Company (Tilton 233-4). The title of his serial novel probably served to carry over Holmes's significant readership from his earlier

column, “The Professor at the Breakfast Table,” which had itself followed his popular “The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table.” Indeed, in 1859 the *Atlantic* enjoyed 40,000 regular subscribers—a fact often attributed to the popularity of Holmes’s contributions—many of whom we may therefore assume read the text that would later be printed as *Elsie Venner*.⁹ Here, Holmes compares females to untamed and undomesticated woodland landscapes:

Strange! The woods *at first* convey the impression of profound repose, and *yet*, if you watch their ways with open ear, you find *the life which is in them is restless and nervous as that of a woman*: the little twigs are crossing and twining and separating like slender fingers that cannot be still; the stray leaf is to be flattened into place like a truant curl; the limbs sway and twist, impatient of their constrained attitude; and the rounded masses of foliage swell upward and subside from time to time with long soft sighs, and, it may be, the falling of a few rain-drops which had lain hidden among the deeper shadows. I pray you, notice, in the sweet summer days which will soon see you among the mountains, this inward tranquility that belongs to the heart of the woodland, with this nervousness, for I do not know what else to call it, of outer movement. One would say that *Nature, like untrained persons*, could not sit still without nestling about or doing something with *her* limbs or features, and that high breeding was only to be

⁹ The story of *Elsie Venner* enjoyed other audiences, as well. It was dramatized in Boston in 1865 (Holmes did not like the adaptation), “with one of America’s leading emotional actresses, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, playing the title role” (Tilton 163, n.2); the novel was also revised in 1883, and brought out again in 1885, 1890, 1891, 1892, and 1893, and as a Cambridge Classic in 1903.

looked for in *trim gardens*, where the soul of trees is ill at ease, perhaps, but their *manners are unexceptionable*, and a rustling branch or leaf falling out of season is an indecorum (186, my emphasis).

Though in this passage Holmes is ostensibly talking about the wild qualities of the natural landscape, he also categorically describes females as “restless” and “nervous”; like twigs and vines they are “impatient” of the constraints that inhere in their own physical shape and form. Holmes accords this nervousness a decidedly *sexual* energy: “rounded masses...swell upward...with long soft sighs,” and there “may be” some dampness “hidden away among the deeper shadows,” evidence, perhaps, of sexual arousal or even menstrual fluid. And yet, “breeding” and “training,” Holmes suggests, can only help many females, like their botanical counterparts, appear more contented with their lot.¹⁰ For woodland species, “training” means both the act of guiding branches to grow in a desired direction, and trimming or paring down and weeding out wayward-growing branches. For the female species, Holmes would argue in this novel, “training” comes with formal schooling, the act of guiding girls in a desired direction, for the sake of “stimulat[ing] the higher tastes and partially instruct[ing] them”(172). Just as medicine could never revert invalid women to absolute health, education could not hope to train them into absolute conformity with social codes.

Several of Holmes’s biographers have compellingly suggested that his conception of the wayward female and his stance against female intellectualism originated in his

¹⁰ For more about this eighteenth century concept of “cultivation,” see Jay Fleigelman’s *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, 25, also discussed in my third chapter.

childhood rivalry with classmate Margaret Fuller (they attended the same Dame school in Cambridge, Massachusetts) and was spurred on by his continuing feelings of attraction and repulsion toward the brilliant feminist who, for her public eloquence and remarkable intellect, would in their adulthood come to be known as the New England Corinne. Tilton notes that Holmes himself suspected “that he had always been jealous” of the

strange tall girl with a disconcertingly aloof manner...a watery aqua-marine lustre in her light eyes [and a] long, flexible neck, arching and undulating in strange, sinuous movements....[Fuller] was not pretty like the “golden blonde” who bewitched half the school, but she was supposed to be smart and she talked about “nah-vels.” When some themes were sent home from the school one day for his father’s literary judgement, Wendell got a look at Margaret’s. It began: “It is a trite remark...” The reader went no further; he did not know what trite meant. He did not like the girl and could not like the woman she grew to be—learned, intellectual, and given to philosophy (24).¹¹

In what Holmes may have taken as a direct affront, Fuller had argued against the purported intellectual disparity of the sexes in her 1843 *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, charging that “history jeers at the attempts of physiologists” to make rules about “what can and cannot be” in woman’s abilities or nature, despite observable proof that women can “be” and do so much more than is claimed for them (293, 260). Fuller does, indeed, appear to be the most obvious model for Holmes’s characterization of Lurida Vincent, a precocious and brilliant schoolgirl attending the significantly-named Corinna

¹¹ See also Miriam Rossiter Small’s *Oliver Wendell Holmes* (25, 130).

Institute in his third novel, *A Mortal Antipathy* (1885). Lurida—whose first name means “swallow” or “ghastly,” and whose last means “conquering”—is known at her school as “The Terror,” because of the unusual “freedom of movement” she “manifested in the world of thought,” and because of her self-described masculine mind (122, 124). However, it is in Holmes’s descriptions of Elsie, whose “glittering eyes” are full of “still, wicked light,” and whose body she “coil[s] and uncoil[s]...snake-like” that he provides the closest *physical* likeness to what he had once described as Fuller’s “lustrous” eyes, “long, flexible neck,” and “arching, sinuous movements” (393, 421, 145). Moreover, his ambivalence toward Elsie—he pities her, but kills her off in the end, for being unable to achieve a stable True Womanhood—seems to reflect something of his attraction and repulsion (like Hawthorne’s and others’) toward this intense female figure. Of course, Elsie Venner is no stand-in for Margaret Fuller: she is neither the intellectual nor the feminist that Fuller was. Yet, in their similarly perverse femininity, Fuller and Elsie (and Lurida, for that matter) embody for Holmes a challenge to preconceived medical notions of what females essentially are like, and a threat to the social order that presumed a fundamental disparity between the sexes.

I disagree, therefore, with the novel’s previous critics who have unquestioningly accepted its most outrageous and unlikely explanation for Elsie’s behavior—that she is part snake, a “species of one,” and, thus, a biological fluke, representative of no real “type” at all (Traister 205, Hallissy 407). Instead, I contend that Holmes considers Elsie *one of a species*, a human being who, like all human beings, has inherited from her ancestors tendencies for which she is not responsible, and which, perhaps, can be

modified by the influences of culture. The argument that Holmes explicitly claimed for his novel—that it is a challenge to the doctrine of original sin—can only work if Elsie is human; religious moral categories of sin or grace would otherwise not apply to her. But more importantly for our purposes, Holmes's implicit argument—that females who are out of step with their culture are also “out of step with the very pattern of the universe”—also demands that we view Elsie not as some sort of chimera but as a human female, subject to specific cultural expectations of human female behavior (Trecker 200). She is, in fact, a symbol of the difficulties inherent in training, for wife- and motherhood, any female who overturns gender expectations and resists her culture’s dictates of proper femininity.

Throughout the novel, Elsie is not presented as part-snake but as a young female whose physiological makeup is so quintessentially pubescent—so volatile and unstable—that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to fully adapt her to the ideals of True Womanhood. Rather than being a total anomaly, she is an extremely perverted specimen of what Holmes conceived to be a sex *by nature* perverted. She is part of a lineage of difficult females that began with the very first woman and promises to continue into the future. Elsie’s name is significant in this regard: her initials nearly spell out the name of that first woman, Eve, whose seductive and rebellious nature Elsie has inherited to a greater degree than other females. Through her connection to Eve, and also to a variety of other dangerous, aggressive, serpentine female figures throughout the novel—including murderous Lilith (by some accounts, Adam’s first and even more rebellious wife), Pythia (the female seer from the Apollo myth, who breathes the fumes exuded by the Python’s

burning carcass and has hallucinatory visions others take for premonitions), Virgil's passionate Dido, Coleridge's Christabel, and Keats's vampiric Lamia—Elsie represents the most recent incarnation of a tenacious variety of the female species which has survived throughout history.¹² In fact, the long form of her name, "Elizabeth," means "the oath of God," whereas Venner shares its root with the Latin verb *venir*, "to come," making Elsie both a promise and curse, some portentous omen to be paid in the future.

Teaching and Curing the Perverse Schoolgirl

In other words, Elsie Venner is part of a prolific and established but dangerous species of female who has transmitted (and may continue to transmit) from generation to generation the tendency to resist or rebel against social codes defining clear roles and behaviors for males and females. The codes that Elsie resists are precisely the same ones that fortify the Cult of True Womanhood: domesticity, piety, submissiveness and purity for females, and adventurousness, dominance, and forward sexuality for males. For example, Elsie frequently sleeps out of doors on Rattlesnake Ledge—the most dangerous and serpent-infested geologic feature of the Mountain—and decorates her own bedroom

¹² Holmes makes liberal reference to each of these folkloric and mythological figures throughout the novel. See the following pages for specific references: to Pythia (190, 413); Dido (176, 421); Christabel (73, 78); Lamia (214, 220, 225). Lilith is not referred to by name; however, scholars of the lamia myth have located its roots in Jewish folklore and specifically in the story of this anti-patriarchal virgin-seductress. Lilith voluntarily leaves Eden after she quarrels with Adam over the position she should take during intercourse: she does not want to lie beneath him because she perceives that position to be subordinate. As punishment for deserting Adam, Lilith must kill one hundred of her own children every day. She conceives these children with sperm ejaculated during masturbation and nocturnal emissions.

not with feminine flowers but natural specimen from the woods, “sculpture-like monstrosities that...helped to give her room a kind of enchanted look, as if a witch had her home in it” (266). One particular item, “a long, staff-like branch, strangled in the spiral coils of one of those vines which strain the smaller trees in their clinging embraces, sinking into the bark until the parasite becomes almost identified with its support,” metonymically represents the threat that Elsie poses to masculine authority in the domestic space (the staff) and to her own potential maternity (the smaller trees in her clinging embrace) (267). Elsie is also reportedly “very uncertain in her feeling about going to church,” and remembered by one priest for having “tore out the frontispiece” of a Bible and keeping *it*, while flinging the rest of the book “out the window” (256). Not surprisingly, the frontispiece image that Elsie keeps is a portrait of Eve’s temptation, about which the priest recalls Elsie saying that “Eve was a good woman, —and she’d have done just so if she’d been there” (256).

Perhaps more importantly for our purposes, Elsie is defiant of female pedagogical authority, refusing to submit to her teacher’s expectations that she will act like a normal girl. In one unintentionally humorous scene, Elsie’s teacher, Miss Darley, sets about grading student compositions, which she wearily anticipates will contain “their occasional gushes of sentiment, their profound estimates of the world,” and imagery consisting “principally of roses, lilies, birds, clouds, and brooks, with the celebrated comparison of wayward genius to a meteor” (70). By contrast, Elsie’s composition—a “descriptive rhapsody” about “The Mountain”—shows “a startling familiarity with some of the savage [and phallic] scenery of the region. One would have said that the writer

must have threaded its wildest solitudes by the light of the moon and the stars as well as by day" (70). Helen Darley is so startled by Elsie's unexpectedly masculine theme that she is driven into an hysterical fit:

Still she could not help reading, till she came to one passage that so agitated her, that the tired and overwearied girl's self-control left her entirely. She sobbed once or twice, then laughed convulsively, and flung herself on the bed, where she worked out a set hysterical spasm as she best might; without anybody to rub her hands and see that she might not hurt herself (72).

Unfortunately, Holmes's reader does not have the privilege of looking over Darley's shoulder to see what Elsie wrote; however, it is clear that Elsie's "familiarity" with the "savage scenery" and "wild solitudes" of the region have not only unfeminized the student but even threatened to overfeminize the teacher. Indeed, it is especially remarkable that Darley cannot stop herself from reading Elsie's "rhapsody"—by definition, a composition having no form or plan and thus mirroring Elsie's own disorderliness—and is, in fact, drawn to Elsie's composition in spite of herself, suggesting that Elsie holds a kind of sexual attraction for Helen Darley. This reading is supported as well by the action Helen takes after her "set hysterical spasm" ends: from her bedroom bookshelf, Helen "took down a volume of Coleridge, and read a short time, and so to bed, to sleep and wake from time to time with a sudden start out of uneasy dreams" (73). Holmes does not tell which Coleridge poem Helen might have read, but it is impossible not to think of his unfinished "Christabel," which features the sexual seduction of a young woman (Darley) by an evil female spirit who pretends to be an

endangered damsel (the troubled Elsie) so as to lure her prey. Although it is unlikely that the act of reading this poem would calm Helen Darley's nerves, Holmes's sequencing of events—Elsie's composition seduces the teacher and triggers an hysterical (and therefore sexual) response—seems intended to evoke "Christabel" and the masculinized female spirit who, like Elsie, preys upon good-willed young women like Darley herself.

If the above scenes demonstrate Elsie's resistance to domesticity, piety, and submissiveness, the following scene best illustrates Elsie's sexual and racial impurities. When Dr. Kittredge spies Elsie through the window of her home one day, he finds her moving about wildly and almost against her will, coiling her arms and undulating like a snake:

Elsie was alone in the room, dancing one of those wild Moorish fandangos, such as a *matador* hot from the *Plaza del Toros* of Seville or Madrid might love to lie and gaze at. She was a figure to look upon in silence. The dancing frenzy must have seized upon her while she was dressing; for she was in her bodice, bare-armed, her hair floating unbound far below the waist of her barred or banded skirt. She had caught up her castanets, and rattled them as she danced with a kind of passionate fierceness, her lithe body undulating with flexuous grace, her diamond eyes glittering, her round arms wreathing and unwinding, alive and vibrant to the tips of the slender fingers. Some passion seemed to exhaust itself in this dancing paroxysm; for all at once she reeled from the middle of the floor, and flung herself, as it were in a careless coil, upon a great tiger's skin....she lay panting [and...] In a few moments...she was sleeping (147-8, italics in text).

In addition to arousing voyeuristic desire, the scene would likely have raised familiar fears of self-pollution for Holmes's mid-century readers. Undeniably erotic, Elsie's half-naked "dancing paroxysm" has a masturbatory quality that evokes Dionysus and his maenads, the mythical, female, and pleasure-loving counterparts to masculine and orderly Apollo. Elsie's long hair, "floating unbound far below the waist," is a metonym for her unconfined pubic area, and a metaphor for her unbridled lustfulness; moreover, her "lithe" and "graceful" bodiced form, her skirt, and her likeness to a fandango dancer in Spain—all present to the reader a "passionately fierce" female figure who needs no man to satisfy her physical desires while she is "alone." Too, Elsie's performance of a specifically "Moorish" dance that evokes her Iberian heritage and her relationship with African Sophy, whose savage, animal nature Holmes repeatedly evokes (238, 348, 419). The fandango, a courtship dance in which two partners entice and arouse one another, but are not allowed to touch, serves as a kind of chaste mating ritual. Thought to have emerged in Spain by way of the African chica (a similar courtship dance), the fandango was described by a writer in 1830 as springing from "the effect of a burning climate, and ardent constitutions" (Blasis 29). Elsie's connection here to the African and Iberian cultures, perceived in nineteenth-century America to be exceedingly primitive and hyper-sexual, underscores again why Elsie would be perceived as being on the verge of a perverted sexuality, dangerous to herself, to the men of Rockland (by fueling their hard-to-control sexuality), and, by extension, to the culture at large.

Until Bernard arrives, none of the guardian figures who watch over Elsie is able to help correct her “perverted” nature. Neither her father nor Sophy can convince her to decorate her bedroom in a more cultivated, feminine style; her teacher, Helen Darley, cannot stop Elsie from the seemingly masculine activities of wandering the Mountain or from writing about it; and Dr. Kittredge cannot prevent her from having her hyperfeminine “dancing paroxysms” (in fact, he does not even try, does not enter the house, but instead simply “shook his head...returned to his sulky, and rode away, as if in a dream”).

However, Elsie is so instinctively drawn to Bernard—the fittest male specimen in Rockland and “the only person who had ever reached the spring of her hidden sympathies”—that she begins, under his influence, to adopt and display the attributes of True Womanhood as she never has before (393). Her transformation is precipitated by Bernard’s masterful, masculine presence in the classroom, and is rooted, therefore, in the student-teacher relationship; like her classmates, Elsie “had taken a new interest in her books, and especially in certain poetical readings which the master conducted with the elder scholars,” and “a new life” had been “awaken[ed]...in her singularly isolated nature”; “she would lift her eyes toward Mr. Bernard, and let them rest upon him....Then they seemed to lose their cold glitter, and soften into a strange, dreamy tenderness. The deep instincts of womanhood were striving to grope their way to the surface of her being through all the alien influences which overlaid them” (183, 395, 393). She begins to keep hymnals and a clasp bible in her bedroom, for example, and to attend church, evidence that she is attempting piety and reversing the behaviors that caused her, once, to throw a

bible out the window (268). She even writes an anonymous request to the reverend that he have the congregation pray “that God would be pleased to look in mercy upon the soul that he has afflicted” (401). While she waits for the prayer which never comes (the reverend forgets about the note that he has placed in his pocket), she sits uncharacteristically still, even “statue-like,” “as if she had been frozen where she sat,” no longer undulating like a snake (417, 415). Importantly, it appears that Elsie has not learned these behaviors from anyone—not from her dead mother, nor Sophy, nor her classmates or female teachers, whose company she has mainly shunned. They are all, rather, naturally and automatically motivated by her attraction to Bernard.

But Elsie’s transformation is also accelerated by the attention that Bernard returns to *her*, singled out from among all of the other students as a most intriguing specimen and provocative female figure. Indeed, Bernard’s relationship to Elsie quickly expands beyond the boundaries of the classroom, beyond their teacher-student roles, when, in his efforts to “solve the mystery” of this student he recruits the advice of Dr. Kittredge and the professor-narrator, creating a coalition of medical men—a new kind of Trinity, perhaps, of the “new gods of science”—who are more inclined to locate physiological justifications for her behavior than to reify outmoded explanations from religion or folklore. Too, Bernard displays a masculine interest in Elsie and a sexual attraction to her that, while he does not admit it to himself (there was “more curiosity...than he would have owned”), is nevertheless evident to the reader and operates to quiet Elsie’s primitive character and amplify her civilized nature (185). As an ideal male *and* a budding young doctor, Bernard brings to his teacher-student relationship with Elsie several layers of

cultural authority—masculine, patriarchal, sexual, and medical—which, as we shall see below, gradually draw into conflict the “awakening,” more adult side of her nature, and the more established, childhood side that revels in nonconformity. Ultimately, this conflict is what kills Elsie: In love with Bernard but rejected by him, Elsie grows lovesick and dies, finally controlled by the twinned mechanisms of natural and social order. Holmes’s response to her death is calculated to evoke readerly sympathy for his heroine, but also serves to reify his scientific perspective that a female like Elsie can never be fit enough, nor True Woman enough, to catch a mate like Bernard.¹³ He closes out the story with the suggestion that, while science and female education can classify, pathologize, and even transform adolescent females, they cannot perform miracles. Like a “huge South American crotalus” that the narrator describes, “of a species which grows to more frightful dimensions than our own,” Elsie is a larger-than-life female, more frightful in her vigor and vitality than most of Rockland’s other female population. She is, in the end, a mutation of the female species, which “we must not hate, unless we hate what God loves and cares for,” but which we are nevertheless “warned to shun, and...even suffered to slay, if need be” (208, cf. 225).

Bernard confesses to himself in the classroom that Elsie’s new interest in her books “gave [him] a good chance to study her ways...to notice the inflections of her voice, [and] to watch for any expression of sentiments,” and he “could not help feeling

¹³ Cynthia J. Davis’s “Medical Insight: Oliver Wendell Holmes and Elsie Venner” and Bryce Traister’s “Sentimental Medicine: Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Construction of Masculinity” each explore at length Holmes’s use of sentimental narrative features to evoke sympathy for Elsie.

that some instinct was working in this girl which was in some way leading her to seek his presence" (183-4). Once he has "half persuaded himself" that his interest in her is purely scientific, but that "he did not wish to study her heart from the inside," Bernard decides to travel up Elsie's beloved Mountain to see what more he can learn about her, all the while "thinking what the chances were that he should meet her in some strange place, or come upon the traces of her which would tell secrets she would not care to have known" (185). A telling (and, again, humorous) symbol of his sexual interest in Elsie, and his need to repress that interest, Bernard brings with him a forked stick "very convenient to hold down a *crotalus* with" (188). Certainly, the actual snakes that live on the Mountain do provide Bernard a reason for caution; however, they also serve as living extensions of the Mountain's phallicism, and, more generally, of the erotic quality that is added to Elsie and Bernard's relationship as he pursues more information about the "strange and secret influences" that Elsie's pubescent physiology exerts upon her character.

Two key events occur as a result of Bernard's trip up the Mountain, which suggest to Elsie that Bernard is a potential mate for her, and which therefore cause her to adopt more and more characteristics of the True Woman. First, Bernard does meet up with a rattlesnake and becomes hypnotized by its gaze, but he is rescued by Elsie herself, who, unbeknownst to Bernard had preceded him up the Mountain, and is able to counter-charm the snake with her own cool stare and lead an entranced Bernard to safety (203). After this encounter, all of Rockland perceives a change in the relationship between Bernard and Elsie, and they assume that romance is afoot. Elsie's cousin Dick Venner, jealous of the teacher who might stand in the way of his marrying Elsie and claiming her

inheritance, then attempts to kill Bernard, but he fails and is banished from the town (368-81). These events are critical because they encourage Elsie to feel a sense of possession over Bernard that provokes in her both a series of True Womanhood-like behaviors, as well as a kind of animal territoriality that buck up against the conventions of proper femininity. Again, I would emphasize that the contradictory nature of these behaviors lend an incoherence to the novel and to Elsie's personality, particularly at the end; however, they also reflect a key tension—in Holmes and his culture—between competing views of schoolgirls at mid-century.

At the moment that Elsie saves Bernard from the rattlesnake, she is portrayed as a suddenly maternal and wifely figure, saving “her” young man from sexual temptation and excessive arousal as Beecher and others had advised women ought to do. On the other hand, because she rescues *him*—and not the other way around—she unmans him:

If Master Bernard felt a natural gratitude to his young pupil for saving him from imminent peril, he was in a state of infinite perplexity to know why he should have needed such aid. He, an active, muscular, courageous, adventurous young fellow, with a stick in his hand, ready to hold down the Old Serpent himself...to stand still...stiff where he stood,—what was the meaning of it? (203)

Bernard is similarly emasculated when, in the novel’s climactic scene, he and Elsie have (amazingly!) their first and only real conversation in the entire novel.¹⁴ After school one

¹⁴ Elsie does address Bernard, briefly, when she is on her death-bed, but he does not answer her. For the remainder of this novel preoccupied with their intense relationship, it is both astounding and fitting that Holmes does not portray them in verbal communication with one another. The “animal intelligence” that he describes as passing between Elsie and Sophy passes here, too (419).

day, Elsie asks Bernard, in an appropriately demure, “very low voice, little more than a whisper,” if he will walk with her home from school, and he agrees to accompany her. However, Elsie’s fatal flaw—her assertiveness, her resistance to submission that was “perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women”—rears its head again, and signals her undoing (Welter 27-8):

“I have no friend,” Elsie said, all at once. “Nothing loves me but one old woman. I cannot love anybody. They tell me there is something in my eyes that draws people to me and makes them faint. Look into them, will you?”

She turned her face toward him. It was very pale, and the diamond eyes were glittering with a film, such as beneath other lids would have rounded into a tear.

“Beautiful eyes, Elsie,” he said,--”sometimes very piercing,--but soft now, and looking as if there were something beneath them that friendship might draw out. I am your friend, Elsie. Tell me what I can do to render your life happier.”

“*Love me!*” said Elsie Venner.

What shall a man do, when a woman makes such a demand, involving such an avowal? It was the tenderest, cruellest, humblest moment of Mr. Bernard’s life. He turned pale, he trembled almost, as if he had been a woman listening to her lover’s declaration.

“‘I do love you, Elsie,’” is the crux of Bernard’s reply, “‘as a suffering sister with sorrows of her own....More than this you would not ask me to say’” (423, emphasis in

text). “It was all over with poor Elsie,” the narrator reports. She falls ill immediately after they part company, and eventually, she dies.

Diagnoses and Prognoses

As these two scenes demonstrate, Elsie’s transformation into a True Woman is profound but ultimately incomplete. Though Holmes imagines Elsie adopting the attributes of female piety, of maternal and conjugal feeling, and of physical self-control, there is something essential in her nature that prevents her from being appropriately submissive, for, while her plea asks Bernard to love *her* (a passive construction), rather than professing love for him (active), her demanding and “extraordinary request, so contrary to the instincts and usages of her sex” makes manly Bernard tremble like a “suffering sister” (446). Here again Elsie reminds us of Lilith, Eve, and Dido, and their similar refusals to bow to patriarchal rules governing what woman should be and do in relation to her mate. It is Elsie’s lack of submissiveness that prevents her, finally, from being loved in a romantic way by Holmes’s ideal man, the only positive marriage choice in the novel. His impotence notwithstanding, Bernard remains the arbiter of Elsie’s transformation. In fact, his impotence and his feminization—more, even, than her death—are what communicate, to Elsie and to Holmes’s readers, that she has failed to reach successful, mature womanhood, despite her other, unimpeachable behaviors.

I want to quickly gloss Elsie’s preposterous death scene here and arrive, finally, at its consequences in and beyond Rockland, to emphasize the major, but no doubt unintended, influence of Holmes’s novel with respect to female education. When Elsie

falls ill, much of Holmes's carefully-crafted scientific realism goes out the window like Elsie's bible. On her death bed, Elsie continues to display stereotypically feminine attributes, such as weeping, expressing grief over the loss of her mother, and embracing her father, each for the first time in her life (442, 453). As a symbolic representation of her continuing transformation, Holmes has her send away from the foot of her bed the primitive and loyal Sophy, only to ask for Helen Darley, that frail and sickly True Woman, to take Sophy's place (426). Yet, just as Elsie reaches the height of her femininity, Holmes returns to the novel his gothic, snaky imagery. Elsie's lovesickness is exacerbated when she receives a basket of flowers from her classmates, which Bernard has lined with ash leaves; unbeknownst to him, such leaves are poisonous to rattlesnakes, and evidently, to Elsie as well. When she finally dies, it is unclear whether the cause was lovesickness (affecting her as a human) or poison (affecting her as a snake that, to continue to analogy, Bernard would have finally succeeded in killing). Holmes wants to have it both ways, it seems, and is finally unable to reconcile his own attitudes toward Elsie, whom he both pities and suffers to slay.

What *is* clear from the novel's ending, though, is that Elsie's death has positive consequences for a variety of Holmes's characters, and for the larger town of Rockland. After Elsie's burial, Rattlesnake Ledge caves in on itself, ridding the town of vipers once and for all. This cataclysmic event kills Sophy, too, who had been outdoors, keeping vigil at the foot of Elsie's grave, when that part of the Mountain fell. Thus rid of all primitive women and snakes, the town settles into stability and patriarchy is reestablished: Elsie's father remarries Helen Darley, rescuing her from superfluity and the perils of teaching;

Bernard returns to school and graduates a doctor, and is last seen engaged to Letty Forrester, whose name signifies that she is the “joy” (Letitia) of the forest, one of those tamed specimen of high breeding, so unlike Elsie, whose “manners are unexceptionable” and for whom a “rustling branch or leaf falling out of season is an indecorum” (186). Holmes even suggests, in the end, that Elsie’s death was good for *her* in some way. We are reminded at Elsie’s death of a claim Dr. Kittredge makes, earlier in the novel, comparing God to a “Great Physician”: “If a man’s pain exceeds a certain amount, he faints, and so gets relief. If it lasts too long, habit comes in to make it tolerable. If it is altogether too bad, he dies. That is the best thing to be done under the circumstances” (320).

Although Holmes was in many ways a progressive thinker, bringing the most advanced science of his day to the problem of female education, his views in this novel also represent an early example of the kinds of conservative thinking that would, later in the century, restrict adolescent and adult females from all levels of rigorous, academic instruction. After the publication of *Elsie Venner*, the advent of the Civil War closed most schools for young females (indeed, for most children of both sexes), and yet, once these institutions started to reopen and rebuild, they were met with fiercer resistance than ever, by doctors like Edward H. Clarke, whose 1873 *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for Girls* contended:

The growth of this peculiar and marvellous [sic] apparatus [the ovaries and uterus], in the perfect development of which humanity has so large an interest, occurs during the few years of a girl’s educational life. No such extraordinary

task, calling for such rapid expenditure of force, building up such a delicate and extensive mechanism within the organism...is imposed upon the male physique at the same epoch....The importance of having our methods of female education recognize this peculiar demand for growth, and of so adjusting themselves to it, as to allow sufficient opportunity for the healthy development of the ovaries and their accessory organs, and for the establishment of their periodical functions, cannot be overestimated. Moreover, unless the work is accomplished at that period, unless the reproductive mechanism is built and put in good working order at that time, it is never perfectly accomplished afterwards (37-8).

Of course, only the publication of Clarke's text could have provoked Julia Ward Howe's equally vigorous 1874 *Sex and Education; a reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's "Sex in Education,"* which compiled testimony from hundreds of doctors, scientists, and educators, each arguing that intellectual work was not harmful to females. It would not do to overstate Holmes's influence in inspiring these debates, which would become so important to later developments in female educational, vocational, and political opportunities. However, his novel's early scientific and cultural work—to limn female normativity, to explain how Darwin might bear on female schooling, and to define the educational institution as an appropriate site for sex-role socialization—clearly fleshes out for modern-day readers the impact of the shift from religion to science (as a means of explaining the world, as well as female nature) in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and helps to explain how adolescent females were early incorporated into the nineteenth-century movement to define female nature and shape female opportunity.

Chapter Three will explore certain other branches of this broad movement, as we look at Native American female education and the ways in which certain groups of Cherokee and Creek seminary students learned to adopt “white” “female” values while retaining the values of their own “Native” cultures, all the while discovering that none of these values were essentially or fundamentally hardwired, but were choices to be made.

Chapter Three

Reading, Writing, and Re-presenting: The Newspaper and the Schoolgirl in the *Wreath of Cherokee Rosebuds* and S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*

On May 26, 1826, Elias Boudinot, a Cherokee schoolteacher and clerk of the Cherokee National Council, spoke before an all-white audience at the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. Although the audience did not yet know *him*, Boudinot had been familiarizing himself with whites and white society for many years. Born Gallegina (Buck) Watie around 1800, the Cherokee had attended white mission schools since the age of six and had, as a young man, adopted the name of a white philanthropist and Native American advocate whom he admired and from whom he had accepted financial support during his schooldays in Connecticut, circa 1818 (Purdue 6).¹ A vocal proponent

¹ The philanthropist, Dr. Elias Boudinot (1740-1821), served as a delegate to the Continental Congress twice, as a U.S. Representative from 1789-1795, as the Director of the U.S. Mint, and most notably, for one year as President of the United States under the articles of Confederation. Most relevant to Buck Watie, though, was probably Boudinot's 1816 work, *Star in the West*, which suggests that the Indians are the "lost tribes of Israel," and his founding, in that same year, of the American Bible Society. An abolitionist and staunch supporter of Native American rights, Dr. Boudinot met Buck Watie when the young Cherokee traveled to New Jersey around 1818. At this time, Dr. Boudinot took a strong liking to Watie, and offered him financial support; in return, Watie adopted the name of his benefactor. It is ironic that Buck Watie was ultimately seen as a traitor to his own people. Bearing the name of Elias Boudinot, the Cherokee would eventually sign the Treaty of New Echota in 1835, agreeing that the entire Cherokee nation would willingly emigrate to New Echota, Georgia. Watie/Boudinot was ultimately axed to death by a group of his fellow Cherokee for what they saw as his betrayal of the tribe in this act.

of Indian acculturation and eventually of Indian Removal policies—which he favored over Indian extermination, the only alternative to Removal that he could foresee—the Cherokee Boudinot had also during his school days befriended a white missionary named Samuel Worcester, whose similar views supported their mutual advocacy of these policies and practices among white and Indian communities alike. Indeed, Boudinot's May 26 speaking engagement was part of an extensive campaign that took Worcester and Boudinot together up and down the east coast of the United States, as they attempted to gain the financial and ideological backing of white church and philanthropic groups for institutions promoting their shared projects of Indian acculturation and “improvement.” This money would supplement funds already being donated to missionary societies by the United States government in an effort to establish schools and churches in the Cherokee nation and thus convert the population to Christianity while teaching them basic academic subjects (such as reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and geography) and “the arts of civilization”—hoeing, plowing, chopping wood, spinning, weaving, cooking, and sewing (Purdue 6). With their own relationship on display as part of the campaign’s performance, wherein the Indian man spoke and the white man supportively listened, Boudinot and Worcester must have made quite a spectacular and convincing piece of proof that the Indian and the white man could comfortably, and even congenially, coexist.

On this particular occasion in May, Boudinot delivered his “Address to the Whites,” a rhetorically complex speech reflecting both his remarkable ability to straddle two cultures and his often-conflicting allegiance to the white and the Indian nations (rpt.

in Murphy 167-76). The “Address” is at once a defense of the Indian and a rationale for an Indian education system modeled on white institutions. Boudinot argues, for example, that “[w]e must silence forever the remark that ‘it is the purpose of the Almighty that the Indians should be exterminated’,” and instead focus on including Indians in white American life (168). Boudinot’s repeated use in this document of the word “we” connects him to his white audience; it demonstrates his shared belief in “the Almighty,” and it suggests that his audience agrees with his own view on preventing extermination and promoting acculturation. As he turns away from the question of *whether* the Indian is to be in American society and toward the question of *what is to be done with* the Indian in American life, Boudinot argues that Native Americans are essentially the same as white Americans, “formed of the same materials with yourself,” and sharing identical desires to “ever be fostered, regulated and protected by the generous government of the United States” (167, 169). Indians (in general, and his own Cherokee people in particular) should therefore have the same advantages as white Americans in order to contribute equally to the great nation that they all share. “More than ordinary means should be employed,” he urges, for the continued “christianization and civilization of this tribe” (173). Thus, Boudinot finally issues his specific request:

[T]he Cherokees has [sic] thought it advisable that there should be established, a Printing Press and a Seminary of respectable character; and for these purposes your aid and patronage are now solicited (173).

Downplaying the very real threat of Indian extermination and focusing instead on Indian progress—on what can help the Native American and the larger, predominantly white,

nation to thrive—in the end, Boudinot makes only the modest proposal that his tribe be aided in establishing a printing press and a seminary (or high school), two institutions that whites themselves had already set up to improve their own society in America.

Joined together via the special place that the school and the press each assign to writing, reading, and the dissemination of information to a mass public, these endeavors, Boudinot believed, would help the Indians fortify and preserve their society around a core of institutions designed by whites: “I do not say that Indians will produce learned or elaborate dissertations in explanation and vindication of their own character, but they may exhibit specimens of their intellectual efforts, of their eloquence, of their moral, civil and physical advancement, which will do quite as much to remove prejudice and to give profitable information” (174). Linking the educational and acculturative benefits to Indians of both the printed word and the formal school, established “upon a footing which will insure to [them] all the advantages, that belong to such institutions in the states,” Boudinot hoped to sustain the Indians’ racial population in ways that would be seen as harmonious with, and indebted to, white society (174).

In this chapter I examine the impact and legacy of Boudinot’s request for a school and a printing press upon several Native American communities and their girl children through the middle- and late-nineteenth century. I explore what effects these groups anticipated the press and the seminary would have upon their lives and, more specifically, what roles they imagined these institutions would play in the girls’ abilities both to acculturate to white society and to preserve some of the distinctive features of their own cultural heritage. I argue that Boudinot’s ideas about the concomitant roles of

the newspaper and the school formed a set of core values that placed writing and reading in an important new relationship to Native American life, and acted as a catalyst for the rapid development of Native schools and newspapers throughout several North American tribes. Though it is not clear that Boudinot envisioned the printing press being used as part of the curriculum at the seminaries he worked to establish, that is, in fact, what happened. The literatures that emerged from these schools and their newspapers vary widely in form, style, content, and skill (for the Cherokee culture had only begun to use written language about a decade before Boudinot's campaign) yet they share in creating what Richard Brodhead would call a "culture of letters"—a set of beliefs and practices belonging to a particular cultural group about "what writing is, does, and is good for," which shapes the way that a social group uses letters in its daily life (8).² In Boudinot's understanding, as we will see here, what writing "is, does, and is good for" includes the promotion of white "Literature, Civilization, and Religion" among Native peoples, as well as an implicit consent that the Indian nation be governed by the white nation, and an imperative to record the gradual "progress" being made toward the erasure of Native identity; the Native press and the process of achieving literacy at school would continue until "they arrive at that state of advancement, when I trust they will be admitted into all the privileges of the American family" (Purdue 15, 31; Murphy 172). However, as

² See Brodhead's *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*. As Brodhead makes clear, "writing is always an acculturated activity," one which "always takes place within some completely concrete cultural situation...that surrounds it with some particular landscape of institutional structures, affiliates it with some particular group from among the array of contemporary groupings, and installs it [in] some group-based world of understandings, practices, and values" (8).

adolescent Native schoolgirls took up Boudinot's charge in the decades to follow, they often reinterpreted the functions of the school and the press as institutional media through which they might both adapt to white culture *and* preserve tribal unity and ethnic identity. For example, though Boudinot saw his own Christianity, and his newspaper's Christian focus, as a bridge between white and Native cultures, the newspaper articles that Native *schoolgirls* read and wrote—about white Christian womanhood and Native womanhood, for example—reflected far more ambivalent views about religion, not to mention patriarchy, femininity, adult life and roles, and the goals of female education, virtually every aspect of individual behavior and group culture with which adolescent girls were to struggle at school.

This chapter traces the history of Boudinot's ideas about writing as they manifested in a loosely cohesive culture of letters which emerged during the middle- and late nineteenth century in writings by Native American schoolgirls from the Cherokee and Muskogee (or Creek) tribes after their contact with whites. As both Gillian Brown's and Lawrence Buell's work on American literary emergence has suggested, we can expect the broad survey of Native American writing I examine here exhibits the “gestures of imitation, appropriation, preservation, parody, duplication, subversion, and innovation” that are so common to postcolonial literatures, of which the girls' writing from these oppressed groups are a vivid specimen (Brown 13).³ My objective in this chapter is to help explain how the educational context created by the joining together of

³ See especially Brown's introduction to her 2001 book, *The Consent of the Governed: The Lockean Legacy in Early American Culture*; see also Lawrence Buell's 1992 essay, “American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon.”

press and school offered Native American girls extraordinary new opportunities to shape the representation of the white and Indian cultures in which they participated, and to shape, as well, the nature of their own participation. Unlike previous studies of the Native American girls' school, which have suggested that in the schools' newspapers students found merely "an alternative to class work" and some vague "educational usefulness," I argue that the Native American females who appropriated Boudinot's ideas about the conjunction of the school and the newspaper learned to use newspaper writing to further their educations about themselves and their role in the world around them, and also to resist the sometimes oppressive force of the educational institutions themselves (Mihesuah, *Cultivating* 36).⁴ Whereas the texts I have examined in previous chapters showed schools drawing on institutional frameworks such as the family and the scientific and medical establishments to articulate their hopes for what an educated female would be like, the texts under study here show schools importing the institutional framework of the press and its ready-made roles of journalist, editor, and reader/subscriber. In direct contrast to the models of proper (Christian) womanhood that the Native girls were also imbibing from their curricula, copied from the example of white schools like Mount Holyoke, their roles as newspaper readers, writers, and editors at school were attended by the expectation that those who fill them—in this case, educated Native females—will

⁴ For an excellent and exhaustively researched account of the Cherokee formal school system, see Devon A. Mihesuah's *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909*. Although Mihesuah's book is ostensibly about the Female Seminary, her early chapters describe how both the Male Seminary and the Female Seminary came into being, as well as the creation of elementary schools, mission schools, and government-owned boarding institutions.

value the free expression of ideas and the ability of the newspaper to balance the promotion of white culture and the preservation of tribal culture.

To this end, I look closely at a number of newspapers that were produced by female Native American seminary students between the 1850s and the 1890s, such as *The Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds* (Cherokee Female Seminary, 1850s), *Our Monthly* (Tallahassee Mission, 1870s) and the *Harrell Monthly* (Harrell International Institute, 1890s). These papers tell us a great deal about the cultural work that was performed by the schools at which they were read and written, as well as about the cultural function of the schoolgirls' presses themselves. Additionally, I examine a variety of "home papers," or Indian-produced newspapers often affiliated with a particular Indian tribe (for example the *Cherokee Phoenix* and the *Muskogee Phoenix*), looking especially at their frequent articles on the importance of newspapers and education to the life and survival of *all* indigenous American tribes. Equally crucial to our understanding of the ways that these educational and assimilative organs were conceived by Native Americans is the imaginative and fictional rendering of Creek (Muskogee) schoolgirl life presented in S. Alice Callahan's 1891 novel, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*. This novel, now thought to be the first penned by a Native American female, offers a narrative account of the daily life of a Creek Indian schoolgirl in the 1870s and 80s, and renders accessible the interrelationship that might have existed among a Native American female student, her school, and the Native press.⁵ Partly fictional and partly historical, Callahan's novel

⁵ Prior to LaVonne Brown Ruoff's 1997 recovery of *Wynema*, the 1927 *Cogewea: The Half-Blood* by Hum-Ishu-Ma (or Mourning Dove) was thought to be the first Native-authored American fiction.

provides a key piece of the puzzle over how Native American educators wanted the newspaper to function. Though I am not suggesting that Callahan consciously used the *Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds* as a model, nor even that the Rose Buds themselves adhered to principles that Boudinot would have accepted, I have been interested in prosecuting the persistence of Boudinot's ideas over time, in Native female student communities that grew increasingly hostile to his brand of assimilationism. That female students maintained and expressed this hostile stance is especially compelling since females in these tribes were *not* (contrary to popular, romanticized portraits of them) granted political voice or matriarchal power. This chapter's comparative look at the relationship among Native American schoolgirls, both real and fictional, as well as the schools they attended and the newspapers they read and wrote for, can help us answer key questions regarding the formation of female identity and the role of the acculturated, educated female within the dual national contexts of white and Native America.

Boudinot's vision of the role of the newspaper in Native life

Before we can trace the legacy of Boudinot's request, though, we need to look more closely at the precise favors that Boudinot asks of his audience, and the benefits that he imagines Native Americans will reap as a result of their cooperation with whites. Despite the fact that Boudinot seems to back away from making a more sweeping plea for the Native American (say, by calling for an end to Indian Removal, or by extending his early argument that "we" must give up the idea of Indian extermination by divine

will), his request for a Printing Press and a Seminary is both more subtle and more ambitious. Boudinot plans, for example, to purchase type fonts for the press in both “English letters and Cherokee characters,” enabling the publication to speak to its segregated white and Indian audiences, as well as to that ever-increasing number of Native Americans who can boast fluency in both languages and cultures (173). “The most informed and judicious of our nation,” Boudinot claims,

believe that such a press would go further to remove ignorance, and her offspring superstition and prejudice, than all other means....Such a paper, comprising a summary of religious and political events...[and] exhibiting the feelings, disposition, improvements, and prospects of the Indians; their traditions, their true character, as it once was and now is; the ways and means most likely to throw the mantle of civilization over all tribes; and...to diffuse proper and correct impressions ...—such a paper could not fail to create much interest in the American community, favorable to the aborigines, and to have a powerful influence on the Indians themselves (173).

Boudinot’s argument suggests that if the Indians are given the means to create and sustain a newspaper with their printing press, they will not need to offer any further proof of their humanity or their value to white culture: they will show it, rather than tell it. Like the brilliant Cherokee blacksmith and silversmith, Sequoyah (born George Guess, 1760-1843)—whose obsession with the written language of the whites inspired him to devote twelve years of his life to creating the Cherokee written alphabet in the first quarter of the nineteenth century—Boudinot was convinced that if Native Americans could adopt a

system so successfully used by the powerful whites, they, too, would inherit power and agency. Crucial to Boudinot's vision of the newspaper and the readers it would serve, though, is the distinction he makes between "the American community" of whites, who will find in the paper "much interest" that is "favorable to the aborigines," and, on the other hand, a separate community of "Indians themselves," whose newspaper production will make them *like* the whites, but not *part of* or *competitive with* the white nation in any threatening way. Again, Boudinot's use of a single ambiguous word is illustrative of his rhetorical skill: referring at times to the Cherokee tribe as "our nation," and at other times allowing that signifier to point toward the larger, largely white, United States which grudgingly and guiltily harbors the Indian tribes, Boudinot relies greatly on verbal slippage to serve his ends. The praise incorporated into his statement that "the most informed and judicious of our nation" see the value of the printing press virtually ensures that his white audience will read themselves into such a knowledgeable and virtuous body. On the other hand, when he claims (as he does below) that the Cherokee only want help becoming "respectable as a nation," Boudinot is unmistakably differentiating the Indians from their white counterparts. He enables his white audience to view themselves as both culturally tolerant of *and* politically separate from the Indian. Setting aside Boudinot's presumably unintentional display of his own conflicted allegiances—his own confused perception of himself as simultaneously an insider and an outsider in white American life—we see here epitomized his ability to walk a fine line between rallying his audience's consent to help the Indians and justifying the actions of those who would exclude the Indian from participating in white society.

As in his justification of the printing press, Boudinot suggests that the seminary will help the whites even more than it will help the Indian, in effect performing a kind of Indian Removal far less drastic than genocide. A “Seminary of respectable character” will take the Indian-ness out of the Indian, eradicating his “savage” qualities and creating a race of civilized men and women who will no longer stall America’s progress by their lack of education. Even so, though the newly educated Indians will be less primitive and more like the white American men and women they so admire, Boudinot still imagines them as a separate political entity, an *imperium in imperio*, giving much to and asking little of the whites. Thus aligning his own interests with those of his white audience, Boudinot strokes the sense of righteousness that he perceives in the white ego. “With [your] assistance, what are the prospects of the Cherokees?” he asks:

Are they not indeed glorious, compared to that deep darkness in which the nobler qualities of their souls have slept [?] Yes, methinks I can view my native country, rising from the ashes of her degradation, wearing her purified and beautiful garments, and taking her seat with the nations of the earth. I can behold her sons bursting the fetters of ignorance and unshackling her from the vices of heathenism. She is at this instant, risen like the first morning sun, which grows brighter and brighter, until it reaches its fulness of glory.

She will become not a great, but a faithful ally of the United States. In times of peace she will plead the common liberties of America. In times of war her intrepid sons will sacrifice their lives in your defence. And because she will be useful to you in coming time, she asks you to assist her in her present

struggles. She asks not for greatness; she seeks not wealth; she pleads only for assistance to become respectable as a nation, to enlighten and ennable her sons, and to ornament her daughters with modesty and virtue (174).

Here again, Boudinot's language and speech patterns mimic white verbal expression: “methinks” seems an especially Anglo word choice. But deeper evidence of Boudinot's own acculturation lies in the ways he appears to have internalized many of the stereotypes about Native Americans that were circulating in white, nineteenth century culture, and which Native Americans were commonly taught in white-run schools (Purdue 9-11): heathen, ignorant, dark, ignoble, and degraded, the unacculturated Indian (he calls them “my country”) is not yet worthy of a “seat” among white Americans.⁶ However, with the educational advantages for which Boudinot seeks support, the Indian can become in many ways indistinguishable from his lighter-skinned fellow Americans, and can serve the country most ably in his and her new, “purified” forms. The men will become soldiers of freedom, putting their “savagery” to good use by “bursting the fetters” of ignorance and breaking the shackles of heathenism, rather than directing their (considerable) aggression toward the whites. The women, on the other hand, will become beautiful and cultivated, “ornamented with [all of the] modesty and virtue” of white republican mothers, ready to bear children and raise them according to the standards of propriety taught in the country’s finest white boarding schools. Importantly, even these improvements will not make the Indian nations “great,” but only “faithful”

⁶ See also Mihesuah’s 1991 essay, “Out of the ‘Graves of the Polluted Debauches’: The Boys of the Cherokee Male Seminary” and, under the name Devon Abbott, her 1987 essay, “‘Commendable Progress’: Acculturation at the Cherokee Female Seminary.”

and loyal to the white leaders of the United States. Boudinot takes special care to ensure and remind his white audience that schooling will not turn the Indians into intellectual giants, nor will it make them competitive with whites or hostile toward them; instead, the Indian nations will constitute a grateful and “useful” corps, whose very salvation will be a credit to the whites of the United States.

The Cherokee Rose Buds

Boudinot’s 1826 campaign helped to create institutions that folded white values into Indian culture while simultaneously advocating for tribal sovereignty and independence. In 1827, with funds raised by Worcester and Boudinot’s tour, the Cherokee Council secured a printing press from Boston, with type fonts in both English and Cherokee characters; the council used it to print primary school books and Cherokee translations of the Bible before Boudinot and Worcester employed it to create the *Cherokee Phoenix*, a dual-language newspaper that they jointly edited, beginning in 1828 in New Echota, near present-day Georgia.⁷ The *Phoenix*—bearing a title which reflects Boudinot’s vision of the Cherokee nation “rising from the ashes of her degradation,” and which again suggests both a superhuman invincibility and a more humble, degraded social status—functioned as Boudinot had earlier imagined a Native American newspaper would do, reproducing legal documents and printing editorials, news articles,

⁷ Among experts of American Indian journalism, the Native press is widely believed to have begun in 1828 with the publication of the *Phoenix*. Some scholars, such as Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. and James W. Parins in *American Indian and Alaska Native Newspapers and Periodicals, 1826-1924*, argue that “a strong case” can be made for Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s *The Muzzinyegun*,” begun in 1826 (xii).

and advertisements as well as lessons in spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and conjugation of both the Cherokee and English languages.⁸ It was not until the late 1830s—after the 1835 Removal had displaced thousands of Cherokee from Georgia to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma, and after Boudinot was axed to death in 1839 by Cherokees angry over his signing, four years earlier, of the Treaty of New Echota—that the Council was able to set up a committee to prepare and establish a formal educational system, and not until the 1840s that they finally allocated funds for the creation of two Cherokee seminaries. Nonetheless, Boudinot’s campaign had initiated a process that would, over the next quarter century, foster an educational coalition

⁸ In Boudinot’s editorials one can trace the evolution of his political opinions, which ranged from his wanting to preserve Indian lands for Indian peoples (and resisting, too, the application of specific Georgia state laws to Native populations) to a completely opposing viewpoint—the support of Indian Removal policies. This shift eventually posed an enormous problem for the paper, since the *Phoenix* was founded, in part, to fight removal and advocate on behalf of Indian rights to the land. Chief John Ross (who would, in 1843-44, found another paper, the *Cherokee Advocate*) eventually demanded that Boudinot stop publishing opinions that ran contrary to those of the Cherokee National Council; he “believed that such reports would only encourage the enemy by letting him see that he now had a divided people to prey upon” (Murphy 29, 33). On the other hand, Boudinot cherished the press as a democratic organ of free expression, and wanted to not only give voice to his views but to preserve, too, the neutral, balanced stance he felt was required of any journalistic endeavor. As a result of his differences with the Chief, Boudinot resigned from the paper on August 11, 1832, explaining in an open letter to the paper’s readers: “Were I to continue as Editor, I should feel myself in a most peculiar and delicate situation. I do not know whether I could satisfy my own views and the views of the authorities of the nation at the same time....I do conscientiously believe that it is the duty of every citizen to reflect upon the dangers with which we are surrounded—to view the darkness which seems to lie before our beloved people—our prospects, and the evils with which we are threatened—to talk over all these matters, and, if possible, come to some definite and satisfactory conclusion, while there is time, as to what ought to be done in the last alternative. I could not consent to be the conductor of this paper without having the privilege and the right of discussing those important matters [...] my usefulness would be paralyzed.”

between whites and Native Americans that, for the most part, projected an *image* of the Indian as happily aspiring toward and succeeding in her assimilation into white culture. In 1850, the Council sent delegates to white schools in Connecticut and Massachusetts (including Mount Holyoke) to learn the shape of their curricula and to interview students and graduates as prospective teachers for the Seminaries (Abbott “Commendable Progress,” 188-9).⁹ As a culminating achievement, in 1851, both the Cherokee Male Seminary and the Cherokee Female Seminary opened their doors to offer Cherokee youth a curriculum of instruction designed according to the principles and methods laid out in the finest, white, New England schools. And in an important turn of events that even Boudinot probably did not foresee when he called for the simultaneous creation of both a printing press and a seminary more than a quarter-century earlier, in 1854 students at the Cherokee Female Seminary began to publish their own dual-language newspaper, the *Cherokee Rose Bud*.¹⁰

The *Cherokee Rose Bud* manifests and conjoins the two educational projects that Boudinot so prized, the seminary and the newspaper, and yields a clearer picture of the relationship that may have existed between these two institutions within the larger Native

⁹ Abbott/Mihesuah’s “Out of the ‘Graves of the Polluted Debauches’” notes, too, that the delegates David Vann and William Potter Ross were authorized to visit schools in Boston, Andover, and New Haven, in addition to Mount Holyoke. For the Male Seminary, they secured two male teachers as a result of this trip: Thomas Budd Van Horne, from the Newton Theological Seminary, and Oswald Langdon Woodford, from Yale (505).

¹⁰ Students at the Cherokee Male Seminary followed suit shortly thereafter, with the publication of the *Sequoyah Memorial*, beginning in 1855. However, this paper was less regularly produced than the paper at the girls’ school. See Mihesuah, *Cultivating* 38, 42-3, and Murphy and Murphy 36, 61.

culture. To be sure, there are many reasons why the *Rose Bud* cannot accurately be said to represent the much larger phenomenon of the Native American school-Native newspaper relationship between 1850 and 1890. Foremost among these, of course, is the fact that the Cherokee National Female Seminary and the Cherokee national press were conceived in the same moment—uttered into existence, in a manner of speaking, by Boudinot’s request—and therefore these institutions enjoy a close relationship not shared by other tribes or their schools in precisely the same way. Moreover, the *Rose Bud* and the Cherokee Female Seminary present an irresistible but highly unusual case study because they are the only Native American school-and-newspaper pair for which so many pieces of textual evidence still exist. However, the *Rose Bud* does offer an occasion for us to identify the seminary’s and the press’s wider mutual efficacy as tools that helped acculturate and educate a great number of Native American female seminary students. Just as the *Phoenix* would leave its imprint on the Native presses that followed it, the Cherokee Female Seminary was enormously influential upon other Native American schools, establishing itself as a standard of excellence to which the other institutions aspired. Its newspaper, too, is a manifestation not only of the seminary’s particular values and those of its students, but also some of the more broadly received and widely diffused praxes of Native American female education.

Early issues of the *Cherokee Rose Bud* make abundantly clear the paper’s indebtedness to Boudinot’s *Phoenix*.¹¹ Like its model, the *Rose Bud* presents articles in

¹¹ Only a handful of issues survive: August 2, 1854 (microfiche); August 1, 1855 (microfiche); February 11, 1857 (typescript). All of these are housed at the Vaughn Library of Northeastern State University. I am grateful to Dolores Sumner, Special

both the English and Cherokee languages; it reports social events (such as marriages and temperance meetings) and “natural” events (such as a solar eclipse) witnessed in the town of publication and throughout the area of distribution; and, just as African-American newspapers would do (beginning in the 1830s; see my chapter 4), it excerpts relevant articles from national white papers such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Chicago Press*. According to Boudinot’s edict that a newspaper should comprise “a summary of religious and political events [... and exhibit] the feelings, disposition, improvements, and prospects of the Indians; their traditions, their true character, as it once was and now is,” the *Rose Bud* prints articles describing such customs as “An Osage Wedding,” and detailing a local Indian “Celebration of the 4th of July,” and it even reprints an essay celebrating “Free Schools” by the educational pioneer Horace Mann. In these respects, the schoolgirls’ newspaper manifests Boudinot’s ideas that the Native press should educate and uplift its Indian readership while at the same time exhibiting to a white readership that the preservation of select Indian customs (such as wedding rituals) have not hindered Native advances in acculturation such as the adoption of the English language and the embrace of white American values.

More complicated to trace, and yet even more important, are the conflicting beliefs and attitudes toward the Indian race that Native school newspapers like the *Rose Bud* exhibited. As we saw earlier, Boudinot internalized the oft-expressed “white”

Collections Librarian, for her help in locating these slim volumes for me. Unfortunately, no other information exists regarding the creation of the *Rose Bud*; for example, there are no diaries or papers from the school to explain who spearheaded the creation of the paper within the seminary, or what discussion there must have been regarding the layout and content of the paper, or the distribution of duties among the students.

notions that the Native American culture and mind is naturally inferior to the white culture and mind. Alternatively, he sometimes argues in his newspaper that the Native American is equal to the white in his abilities, intelligence, and humanity. This in itself would not surprise Native press scholars Daniel Littlefield, Jr. and James Parins, who argue that the *Phoenix* “was a propaganda device established by and reflecting the views of, Cherokee leaders then in power. Its purposes were to demonstrate that the Cherokees were not ‘savages’ but were rapidly acculturating and to rally support for Cherokee sovereignty”(xii). That these contradictory positions would be repeated in papers written by the schoolgirls and, as we will see later on, in Callahan’s *Wynema*, is not necessarily a sign of Boudinot’s influence alone: surely, many oppressed peoples report feeling both shame and pride about those things which make them stand out and which make them susceptible to oppression. However, Boudinot’s *Phoenix* provided the most visible and influential model wherein a newspaper was claimed by a Native group as its own mouthpiece and forum, and yet served simultaneously to ventriloquize non-Native (and even anti-Native) attitudes in the voice of the Indian newspaper contributor.

Most compelling for our study are the contrary attitudes toward female intellect and female newspapers expressed in the *Phoenix* and later embodied by the *Rose Bud*. One might expect the seminary students to have been deliberate and careful about the attitudes toward female ability that they selected to reprint; the *Rose Bud* writers, though, seem at times to have taken wholesale the sort of articles about girls and women that appeared regularly in papers throughout the country to disclaim female intellect and emphasize the image of woman as a pretty little thing without need for thought.

Boudinot's influence is strong here, too: although his "Address" explicitly requested the founding of educational institutions for both boys and girls, thus suggesting an equal-opportunity approach to male and female education, in his other writings—including, most significantly, his journalistic efforts—he expresses an ambivalence about female education that rivals his conflicted attitude toward Indian abilities.¹² And so, where Boudinot prints an essay on "Female Delicacy," which argues that girls' "bodies," "features," "voices," "tempers," and "intellectual powers" should all "denote a characteristic delicacy," the *Rose Bud* publishes essays on kindness, flowers, music, beauty, analyses of the nighttime dreams of various seminary students, and their flitting "Thoughts In Study Hour" (which are not strictly about the lesson at hand—suggesting that girls may not be entirely serious about their academic work—but instead about the imagined "destiny" of the "reporter's" classmates).

¹² Boudinot had also, as a student in 1818, translated into Cherokee an anonymously written tract called "Poor Sarah, or, The benefits of religion exemplified in the life and death of an Indian woman," and this text similarly voices doubts about Indian and female intellect, even while it argues that (especially female) Indians can become sincere and devout Christians. "Poor Sarah" is a conversion narrative about an elderly Indian woman who is beaten but otherwise neglected by her incorrigibly and perpetually drunken husband. Her sorrows lead her to a Bible meeting and to a love of Jesus, which helps her to surmount the pain of her husband's beatings (as well as the pain of loneliness when he dies), to endure the sufferings of poverty and hunger, and to rejoice when a benefactor gives her a clean suit of clothes for her own burial. Though Sarah learns to read the Bible, she does not wish to read anything else. In English, the text may have functioned as a reminder to missionaries Boudinot met (at his school, administered by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions) of the population best served by their work. Imagine it translated into Cherokee for an Indian audience, though, and it reads more like an exemplum, instructing particularly Indian women that the only learning they need is scriptural, and that they can achieve that knowledge by attending prayer meetings and rehearsing over and over again the biblical passages that would most comfort them and most please God.

On the other hand, where Boudinot expresses, in a column immediately juxtaposed with the essay on “Female Delicacy,” his “Thoughts on Newspapers,” claiming that these printed vehicles “are the great engine that moves the moral and political world...[and are] infinitely powerful to establish the character of a people, as well as to preserve their liberties [of] self-government,” he implies that *all* newspapers, including those printed in girls’ schools, lend force, power, and independence to their writers and readers. In other words, he suggests that newspapers can offer girls a way out of their more traditional social roles, a kind of sanctioned rebellion in a social context that otherwise prescribed more strictly demure behaviors for females. Native papers in particular, the *Cherokee Advocate* later argued (under the editorship of Elias Boudinot’s son, William Penn Boudinot), can offer a community of readers “a voice enabling it to speak for itself, —to expose attempted outrage, —to defend disputed right, —to expostulate and protest against the works of bad men, —to appeal to the honor and honesty and solicit the moral aid of good men...” (“Indian Newspapers,” November 5, 1870, 2).¹³ This attitude, also taken seriously by the students of the Cherokee Female Seminary, manifests itself in the *Rose Bud* via articles that defend the girls’ own news-writing endeavors. Such essays “speak” in the first person about the writers’ will toward self-government, and claim for the schoolgirls their rights to express frustration, anger, disagreement, and other “indelicate” emotions they feel about the process of growing up

¹³ William Penn Boudinot was likely named by Elias for his friend Jeremiah Evarts, secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who published many newspaper columns advocating on behalf of the American Indian, using the *nom de plume* “William Penn.”

Indian and female in a white world.¹⁴ There is no outward sign that the girls consciously wrestled with the competing images of female ability that their newspaper exhibits, no specific essay by a schoolgirl that directly queries what it means to be both female and Indian. However, the very contradictory nature of the messages these schoolgirl news articles send—the seminarians are at once both willful and submissive—suggests that this struggle ensued volubly and violently.

A *Rose Bud* article by a seminarian named Na-Li, titled “The Algebra-Sum Soliloquy” and printed August 2, 1854, for example, ostensibly works through the frustration this student feels over not being able to determine the answer to her math problem. Beginning with a complaint about how long, hard, and unavailingly she has worked at her task, and ending with a narrative of the deliberate and careful steps she must take to finally achieve success, the essay is a tale of perseverance but also of woe: “I wonder what the Algebra man made such sums to be published for? I do not see what good it does me; it seems as if the more I try to get it right the more difficult it is; just making one’s brains ache for nothing” (3). The February 11, 1857 issue similarly includes “A School Girl’s Complaint,” lamenting the difficulties of geometry and Latin,

¹⁴ Forums for private writing, such as letters, scrapbooks, and autograph books, took on the same cathartic function. Sallie Rogers’ autograph book, for example, housed at Northeastern State University’s Vaughn Library, contains this entry from her cousin Ada at Christmas, 1880, just before Sallie’s graduation from the Cherokee Female Seminary: “Cousin mine:/ The world is a *nettle*; disturb it, it *stings*.// Grasp it *firmly*, it stings *not*.// On *one* of two things/If you would not be stung, it behooves/ You to settle;/ *Avoid* it or *crush* it.’/ Ada” (unnumbered). It is just this sort of awareness of the world and one’s place within it that the *Rose Bud* sometimes records, albeit in a much more public forum than the autograph book. Ada does not attribute the lines to anyone, but it is taken from the British Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Lucile*, a long romantic poem the students probably read at school.

as well as a distressing, brief article entitled “My Fate Twenty Years Hence,” in which the schoolgirl imagines herself looking back on her school days from her own dismal, post-graduation future. Although she plans to remember herself a “merry school girl at the Female Seminary, surrounded by a happy company collected for the purpose of acquiring useful knowledge,” and looking “forward to a bright future where our path should be strewed with roses,” the writer also imagines bleak days ahead: “...time passed and stole away the joys of our youth—our happy band was scattered long ago to tread on different roads...Here I am then, a poor impatient, cross, old school ma’am...” (not paginated). Clearly, the schoolgirls’ forays into newspaper journalism allowed them to air grievances about the subjects they studied, their frustrations with teachers (those poor, impatient and cross old women), their considerable anxiety about the future, and their concern over how well or ill served they would be by their formal education at the Seminary. Taken together, the articles exhibit a culture of letters for which public writing is a sort of community sounding board, having cathartic appeal for many students experiencing the hardships of acculturation via the schoolhouse, and perhaps functioning as a warning, too, for those readers who would yet choose to be students there, as well.

More than simply registering the conflicting attitudes of the schoolgirls toward their school environment, though, or the pride and shame that they felt, simultaneously, about being Indian in a white-dominated world, the *Rose Bud* highlights the influence of both the newspaper and the seminary upon Native American females in the nineteenth century, and it foregrounds their association in three particular ways that are useful to our study. First, the impression made upon the girls’ lives by the newspaper and the seminary

was not merely sequential but simultaneous.¹⁵ That girls could go to school and read and produce newspapers at the same time, rather than merely using print media to extend the reach of their educations after graduation, indicates the transformative, socializing function of the press in seminary life. Second, as both the seminary and the newspaper were influenced by the presence of white Christian female teachers from schools such as Mount Holyoke, both were organs for female students to learn specific standards of Christian femininity and to demonstrate what they had learned in person and in print. Third, conflicts between the school's mission to adopt white models of female intellect and virtue, and the newspaper's mission (based on Boudinot's model) to preserve the Native heritage of Cherokee femininity, created a rift through which the girls could perceive the constructedness of female and racial identity. Ultimately, many students would write newspaper articles from the confusing, challenging, sometimes liberating perspective of looking through that rift between two cultures.

The simultaneity of the school and the newspaper was critical in mutually enforcing and shaping the students' acculturation toward the (white) culture of the school, giving the students opportunities not only to read about but also to write of their own successful and unsuccessful experiences with the values they were learning to adopt and

¹⁵ Boudinot suggests in his "Address" that Cherokees must be acculturated by a variety of means, simultaneously—that they should be immersed in the new culture's language and values and methods of transmitting information—in order for the process to take root well. It is also crucial that the process take root quickly enough to convince the whites that such acculturation is possible, and thereby stave off Indian annihilation: the "adult part of the nation will probably grovel on in ignorance and die in ignorance...unless the proposed means [of creating a school and a newspaper together] are carried into effect" (Qtd. in Murphy 173).

the behaviors they were learning to practice. In a broader sense, too, the publication of the newspaper at school, to be disseminated not only among the students but also outward to the wider Cherokee community, facilitated the sense that Indian education is a public endeavor, one in which the entire community has an interest and a stake. Since newspapers like the *Rose Bud* regularly reported the results of examinations, the proceedings of graduation ceremonies, and brief narrative accounts by students who felt they had failed academically or socially for some specific reason, the newspaper expanded the disciplinary and evaluative audience to include teachers, students, and potentially the entire local Native American community, as well.

Later papers, such as Tullahasee Mission's *Our Monthly*, also functioned as a centripetal force in the lives of Tullahassee's students and the larger Creek community. Architectural diagrams of the school show a separate room designated specially for the press, and indicate the central place of the newspaper in school life. The first issue of that paper also stated the *Monthly*'s broader goals, encouraging a community to form around the school and its press:

The main object of our paper will be the moral and intellectual improvement of our Tullahassee boys and girls. We hope that the prospect of getting their compositions once a month into our paper will be a motive which will urge them on to greater painstaking in writing them.

But while it is intended chiefly for the boys and girls of Tullahassee...they are not the only ones we would like to reach and also to hear from. Contributions from any of our friends in the Nation who feel interested in the welfare of our

school, and of our *paper* will be very thankfully and gladly received...(rpt. in Bass 242; italics in original).

As with the Cherokee *Rose Bud*, the Creek *Our Monthly* began as a school newspaper that had at its roots the intention of grounding the larger Creek community in the life of the school. In both of these cases, the student contributors understood it to be their duty to produce writing good enough to represent the acculturative machinery of the school and its value to the surrounding community.

Relatedly, that sense of the larger community as audience helped to foster a connection between the students and the uneducated or less educated population of the Indian territories. Part of the schools' mission was often (and this was certainly so with the Cherokee Female Seminary) to prepare female students to teach and thereby uplift the uneducated masses of Native Americans both young and old. The girls' newspapers gave seminary students the opportunity to begin developing links between themselves and their future students, teaching those younger than themselves by example and from within the somewhat close atmosphere of the seminary building. As important, the simultaneity of seminary education and school newspaper production also helped to prevent students from feeling cloistered by the seminary, or removed by their education from the rest of the Indian world. As a matter of public record, the circulating newspaper brought the girls repeatedly out into the wider community, in some sense declaring the girls' presence, impact, and intention despite their distance from home and their inability to act as real teachers until their own graduation. The girls' simultaneous projects of conducting lives at the seminary and recording and disseminating reports of that conduct,

as shown on the pages of the *Rose Bud*, together reinforce the efficacy of the school and the newspaper in helping Indian students to envision themselves as productive agents and accountable members of a community they would help to build, fortify, and uplift.

Both the seminary and the newspaper were organs for *female* students to learn and circulate specific lessons about their own educational and assimilative process. The dual media of school newspapers and seminary classes helped to clarify and reiterate for female seminarians the particular goals and standards of (white) femininity to which they should aspire. As girls took classes in botany, rhetoric, mental philosophy, and literature, the lessons students absorbed were reflected in their contributions to the school newspapers. In its articles on “Beauty,” “Intemperance,” “Music,” and “The Power of Kindness,” for example, the *Rose Bud* points to the ways that seminary life enforced behaviors linked to the Cult of True Womanhood, and so prominently enforced in the white schools on which the Cherokee Female Seminary and countless other Indian schools were modeled. Although the girls did take classes in government, as well (to understand the operation of both the United States government and the tribal governments of their own Indian nations), no evidence exists of overtly political discourse on the pages of the *Rose Bud*, and this fact may be attributed to the prevalent Cult of True Womanhood-type standards dictating women’s absence from political life.¹⁶ Additionally, classroom use of “object lessons,” with which girls could analyze and

¹⁶ The *Harrell Monthly*, a paper issued from the Harrell International Institute in Muskogee in the 1890s, even went so far as to explicitly prohibit political and sectarian subjects, favoring instead that only religious and educational articles be transmitted from the Methodist school to proselytize to the larger community. See Foreman, *Oklahoma Imprints 1835-1907: A History of Printing in Oklahoma Before Statehood*, 236.

critique the behaviors of other real or fictional girls according to these standards of femininity, were complemented by articles in the school newspapers that explicitly examine the differences in Indian female life before and after the introduction of formal schooling. With exempla like “A Walk” (August 1, 1855), which details the regret of two students who put off their studies to explore the woods and, forgetting the time, miss their study hour, fall behind in their work, and embarrass themselves during the next day’s class, the *Rose Bud* demonstrates, too, how the school newspaper then served as a vehicle to remind students that their successful or unsuccessful adaptation of these behaviors were subject to constant scrutiny, that they were observable and recordable for all to witness. Too, the poignant essay, “Two Scenes In Cherokee Land,” also printed in the August 1, 1855 edition of the *Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds* (to which the *Cherokee Rose Bud* changed its name that year), instructively pairs, like a “before” and “after” picture, one scene of Indian life *prior* to the availability of seminary education against another scene taking place *after* the introduction of formal schooling. The first scene is set “[i]n rudeness and uncivilization,” where “[n]o little stand of books, no vase of flowers, filling the room with fragrance, no neat papers are to be seen; nothing but the mere necessities of life.”¹⁷ By contrast, the “after” picture indicates “[b]y the fenced

¹⁷ The author of this “before” scene is Na-Li, the same seminary student whose work we read on previous pages; the “after” scene is authored by a girl who calls herself Fanny.

Na-Li’s identity is somewhat controversial among Native American historians. According to Lisa Stopp at the Cherokee Cultural Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, oral tradition suggests that Na-Li was later known as Lucy Lowrey Hoyt Keyes, author of the *Wahnenuahi Manuscript* (an 1889 account of Cherokee life and traditions which Keyes transmitted to the U.S. Government before negotiating the terms of its sale herself). However, Na-Li describes herself as a full Cherokee and an orphan of uneducated parents (in an August 2, 1854 article entitled “An Address to the Females of the Cherokee

fields of wheat and corn [... that] civilization and nature are here united in our Cherokee land.” “What has produced the change?” asks the author of this article. She responds to her own query thus:

The Missionaries came and brought with them the BIBLE. They taught our ancestors the precepts of religion and the arts of civilization; to cultivate farms and erect neat little cottages. They taught them also the knowledge of books, and the value of education. Thus, under the influence of the religion of the Missionaries, the wild Indian was changed and became a new man.

By listing all of the domestic features that she has noticed are absent from the first scene—books, vases filled with fragrant flowers, “neat” papers, and other decorative attributes—the author of this story displays her understanding that her education is supposed to equip her as much with the *appearance* of a cultivated mind, as with the cultivated mind itself. Similarly, her proud exposition of the changes that are wrought by the missionaries—changes that include the reorganization of the tribe’s spiritual, religious, and cultural values, as well as their agricultural practices—demonstrates that

Nation”), whereas Lucy Hoyt was reportedly of mixed ancestry (part white) and was *not* orphaned; her parents, furthermore, were both wealthy and educated.

It seems unlikely to me, though not impossible, that Na-Li and Lucy Keyes are nevertheless one and the same person. That is, Na-Li may have been of mixed ancestry and only pretending to be a full-blooded Cherokee in order to cultivate a more persuasive Native ethos for her writing. The Muskogee poet, Alexander Posey would participate in this kind of literary passing later, in his *Fus Fixico* letters (1902-1908), published in the *Indian Journal* newspaper he edited. There, Posey took on the persona of a full blooded Creek who was uneducated or poorly educated. His letters offered political critiques of the white government and the Creek government, so his pseudonym gave him a safe cover for his true identity. If Lucy Hoyt was also adopting a full Cherokee persona, she would be the first Native American on record to do so.

she has accepted a Christian value system which transcends both race and nationality. Dedicated to “The Good, the Beautiful, and the True,” the *Wreath* thus incorporated the Cherokee National Council’s goals for female education, which were remarkably like the goals of various white seminaries for their own white students: just as Mount Holyoke, for example, strove to refine and graduate girls to be good wives and mothers, and teachers to future generations of students, the Cherokee Female Seminary sought to create good wives for educated Cherokee males, and a corps of teachers for the uneducated Cherokee tribesmen.¹⁸ In Boudinot’s own words, the school newspaper would help to “reclaim [the girls] from a savage state” (Purdue 94). As Laura Wexler has argued much more recently, “through teaching reading,” Native American educational institutions “would be able to do what the persuasive powers of the entire U.S. Cavalry had tried and failed to do: to persuade the Western tribes to abandon their communal, nomadic way of life, adopt the prizes, mores, and values of consumer culture, and turn their little girls into desirable women on the middle-class commodity plan” of the Cult of True Womanhood (Wexler 25-6).

¹⁸ See also Ann Stephens’ 1860 novel, *Malaeska: Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, which is mentioned in Kristin Herzog’s introduction to her *Women, Ethnics, and Exotics: Images of Power in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (1983, pp. xxi): “the heroine [in Stephens’ novel...] appears as the noblest of all savages. She possesses all the requirements of the beautiful Indian: a laugh as musical as a birdsong, hair that glowed like a raven’s wing, and motion as graceful as an untamed gazelle. ‘Her language was pure and elegant, sometimes even poetical beyond...comprehension, and her sentiments were correct in principle, and full of simplicity...She was never seen to be angry, and a sweet patient smile always hovered about her lips...., the poetry of intellect and of warm, deep feeling, shed a loveliness over her face seldom witnessed on the brow of a savage.’ She spent her life ‘in piling up soft couches for those she loved, and taking the cold stone for herself. It was her woman’s destiny....Civilization does not always reverse this mournful picture of womanly self-abnegation.’” (xxi).

Photographs of the Rose Buds themselves—the seminary students—indicate how deeply the girls learned to adopt those values and internalize a white, middle-class sensibility of what it meant to be an educated female. Such images demonstrate the girls' sense of belonging to a highly visible and easily identifiable community bound by elaborate rules and rituals for female appearance. Meant to express the students' wholesale, group adoption of white standards for feminine beauty, the picture shows the girls dressed alike in white blouses buttoned up to the neck and down to the wrist; their "every hair [is] in place," combed, braided, and pinned to signify a civilized dominance of will over the unruliness of the savage body.¹⁹ The very fact that a photograph was taken for the express purpose of showing the backs of the girls' heads and indicating, thereby, the amount of time and energy that each girl devoted to her appearance, gives a sense of both the importance that was placed at the seminary on looking "right," and the matter-of-fact regularity of girls being inspected as goods bound for market. To the

¹⁹ Images deleted in electronic copy of dissertation; author awaiting permission. By contrast, Lucy Keyes describes Cherokee dress before contact with whites: "In early times, the clothing of the Cherokees was made entirely of the skins of animals which they killed in hunting. The Cherokee women became quite skillful in making clothes for their families, when very young, girls were instructed in the art of preparing material for, and making clothing. After dressing, the skins were rubbed and polished until they were very smooth and soft, often nicely ornamented, by painting in different colors; for paint, or dye, the juices of plants were used..."

"The women wore a skirt and short jacket, with leggins and moccasins, the jacket was fastened in front with silver broaches, the skirt was fringed and either painted or embroidered with beads, and the moccasins were trimmed with beads, in many colors. Their hair, they combed smooth and close, and folded into a club at the back of the head, and tied very tight with a piece of dried eel skin, which was said to make the hair grow long" (190-1). Jack Kilpatrick, who edited this version of the manuscript, notes that artists Francis Parsons, George Catlin, and John Mix Stanley all corroborate Wahnenuhi's statements about early nineteenth-century Cherokee dress in their paintings.

surrounding community of Cherokees living near the school, the girls' uniform appearance would immediately mark them as seminary students who, it was widely advertised, were preparing to devote their lives to Indian improvement and uplift. No doubt, their distinctive style would also mark these girls as eminently qualified to impart white values to the rest of the Indian community, since they had obviously learned them quite thoroughly.

Other equally staged photographs indicate the insidiousness of those values and the girls' internalization of racist attitudes toward Indians and other non-whites. One such image portrays a group of seminary students "playing Indian" by wearing feathered headdresses and preparing to shoot with a bow and arrow; their dark, loose-fitting skirts and short-sleeved blouses (exposing more skin than middle-class white women would) are more suited to a life spent out of doors—hunting game, for example—than are the white blouses in the images referred to above. Although the photograph represents a socio-cultural inaccuracy—for it was the Cherokee males, not the females, who hunted and protected the tribe militarily—the scene captured here surely reinforced for seminary students the notion that uneducated Indians used primitive tools and dressed in bizarre costume (Purdue 4).²⁰ Like the article "Two Scenes from Cherokee Land" discussed

²⁰ Ellen Whitmore, that former Mount Holyoke student who, in 1851, became one of the Cherokee Female Seminary's first teachers, reported in her journal of October 8 that year, the following tidbit: "The girls [students] are very pleasant and very happy—had a little fun just as the bell rang for study hour in which I joined heartily. Two of the girls called [on me?] in the guise of Indians and succeeded very well in carrying out their farce" (20). Unfortunately, Whitmore does not elaborate: it is unclear whether these particular students were themselves Native American or not, and how, precisely, they disguised themselves. Nevertheless, it is fascinating that these students would, so soon after the opening of the school term, understand enough about the stereotype of the

above, this image suggests how “rude” and “uncivilized” were the values and behaviors of the Indians before contact with the whites. Similarly loaded, another image reveals a group of seminary students and their teachers (including a white male, possibly a visiting missionary from the boys’ seminary) performing in blackface, with costumes comprised of the folksy clothing and elaborate haberdashery that denoted a stereotype of African American southern society of the late nineteenth century. The exaggerated postures of the students and teachers in this photograph, along with their suppressed smiles, point toward the performative aspects of the scene; the photograph captures how the students entertained themselves and one another, and shows how they adopted a white mode of revelry and used it to “pretend” that, as schooled Indians, they were less Other than the negro caricatures they perform here.²¹ That the skit being performed is entitled “De debatin’ club” reminds us again how keenly aware these students were of the power of language and dialect to identify a person as a member of a particular ethnic, racial, and class grouping. All of these photographs make clear that other activities at the school, together with the production of the newspaper, confirmed and fortified a hierarchical vision of American society which placed whites at the top, Indians and blacks near the

Indian to “dress up” as a “Native” for fun. A possible alternative interpretation is that Whitmore misunderstood the girls’ intention in their play, missing the fact that the joke was on her for “mistaking” the girls as Indians just because they were dressed in traditional garb, and thus mistakenly seeing them as non-Indian when they are dressed in the more conventionally “white” clothing of the school “uniform.” See *The Journal of Ellen Whitmore*.

²¹ It is unclear to me where the girls first witnessed or conceived of these caricatures, however there are myriad possible sources. Many of the seminary students, for example, came from slave-owning families whose social atmospheres may well have bred these parodies of the uneducated Negro (Purdue 11).

bottom, and the educated or acculturated Other somewhere in between these two poles, depending on how closely they could approximate white, upper- or middle-class behaviors and attitudes, and how easily they could spurn associations with their non-white ancestors: the more white they could “become”—not by changing their skin color, obviously, but by appropriating blackface entertainment, as whites had done—the better. These group poses all suggest, too, that the school administrators approved of placing large numbers of students together in carefully orchestrated situations and controlled environments, and thus supervised the mechanism of mutual indoctrination among the girls at the seminary.

And yet, another remarkable photograph hints at the other side of this coin of mutual influence: the subversive threat posed by just such an educational environment that would congregate masses of young and spirited females, some of whom may rebel against the values overtly taught to them at school, and who may easily, by the school’s own prized system of control, influence one another also to rebel. An untitled photograph of the Cherokee Female Seminary’s 1874 graduating class pictures a large number of students standing before the seminary building. Strikingly, the girls appear both cultivated and wild, refined and unkempt, carefully posed (as are those in the background, standing on the front steps of the building) and haphazardly scattered about (like those standing on the front lawn in tall, untamed grasses). Although all of the girls in the foreground have traded traditional Native garb for Victorian-style dresses and woven hair, more than a few have kept their long hair loose in this photograph. Some stare defiantly into the camera, refusing to offer the smile that was, by the 1870s, a

widely accepted convention of posing for photographs. Compared to the other images of Cherokee Female Seminary students which proudly demonstrate their knowledge of that convention as well as, for example, the girls' impeccable grooming and corporal discipline, this image stands out as pictorial evidence of the girls' ambivalence toward the forces that would constrain them at school.

Such defiance is certainly also present on the pages of the *Rose Bud*, in verbal rather than visual form, and this third association between the school and the newspaper encouraged not only group cohesion but also group subversion and anti-acculturation activities. Publishing partly in English and partly in Cherokee (as Tullahassee Mission's *Our Monthly* would later publish in both English and Creek), the *Wreath* as a whole makes manifest for the girls that their education was designed literally to verse them in both cultures, and to teach them to identify with speakers of both languages. Indeed, since the girls alternately signed their contributions using their Cherokee and their (adopted) English names, the *Wreath* evinces that the paper succeeded in enforcing this dual identification. Through its bilingualism, as well as through the paper's emphases on Christianity and domestic virtue, the schoolgirls' newspaper would help them to participate in their own acculturation to white society; yet, some articles in the *Wreath* also shed light on the ways that seminary students could also resist acculturative forces through newspaper writing and reading.

Certain pairs of articles—close, but non-identical “translations” of stories written in both Cherokee and English, and published in a single issue of the *Wreath*—gave students the opportunity to tell a single story from both a “Native American” and a

“white American” perspective.²² An example of this double-voiced phenomenon was published in the *Wreath* on August 1, 1855, and presented in both English and Cherokee (the English version is on pages 5 and 6; the Cherokee version is on page 7). The English version, contributed by a student named Icy and entitled “The Two Companions,” personifies Hope and Faith as two young girls, not unlike the seminary students themselves. In this story, on “a bright and beautiful morning in Spring,” an unnamed “maiden of about sixteen began a journey in a new and untired [untried?] way.” Although she is warned that her path will be difficult and “strewn with thorns and briars,” “a venerable friend had promised that she should be accompanied by two lovely *companions*, to guide and support her” (italics in original). To be sure, when the going gets rough for the young maiden, the “silvery voice[d]” “HOPE” appears and assuages the girl’s discomfort with her cheerful presence. After a while, though, Hope’s springing step carries her far ahead of the story’s main character, leaving her alone again, uncomfortable, and afraid. Next, a “tiny blue-eyed child [comes] running up to her” and offers her support. The main character scoffs; the child is far too small to provide assistance to a sixteen year old girl. But, the child “insists,” her name is “FAITH...and she would...grow larger.” Soon, the pair catches up to Hope, and all three walk on together. In a conclusion that echoes Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (as well as other parables of Christian faith the seminary students might have read), they arrive at “the *Beautiful City* where her journey was to end,” and after crossing a “cold, dark river”

²² By contrast, “very little content of [the *Phoenix*] appeared in parallel Cherokee and English” (Littlefield and Parins 26).

together, “the gates of the *Glorious City* were thrown open, and amidst strains of heavenly music, she entered and received the victor’s crown” (italics in original).²³

This Christian parable is so heavy-handed that it hardly seems to require interpretation. However, it is especially noteworthy that the young maiden at the story’s center, like the environment she passes through, is almost completely featureless. She has no clear markers of race or ethnicity, which likely made it all the easier for readers to imaginatively project themselves into her place—in that nowhere land which is as nondescript as it is supposed to be inviting. We know that the main character is approximately the age of the seminary students, that she speaks English (as must the reader of this version of the story), and can perhaps be best described as a reluctant or new devotee of Christian principles (otherwise, why would she doubt Faith’s ability to sustain her?). To the Cherokee schoolgirl reader, the story may have held out a promise that even her hesitant initiation into Christian values would be rewarded in the end, and that efforts to erase her own Indianness—by heeding the advice of her “venerable friends,” or teachers, and adopting their values as her own—would assure her not only of a place in the heavenly domain but of God’s grace here on earth. In this version of the

²³ Inventories of the seminary’s library holdings are hard to come by and quite incomplete: library holdings and other papers were destroyed several times by fire, as well as by troops who used the seminary building to store arms during the Civil War when the school was closed, and also, of course, by the ravages of time. However, some mention is made in the catalogues from graduation ceremonies of the kinds of texts the girls read. The Catalogue of the year closing February 11, 1857, for example, lists Milton’s *Paradise Lost* among the studies of the First Class of students. Other scripture-based readings were likely for the Bible lessons included in the curriculum. The Catalogue is included in the Northeastern State University Vaughn Library, Special Collections. Again, I thank Dolores Sumner, Special Collections Librarian, for her help in locating this document.

story, non-Indianness, whiteness, and Christianity are bound up together as a set of goals toward which it is attractive and noble to strive.

By contrast, the Cherokee-language version of the story suggests that Christianity, whiteness, and non-Indianness are worthwhile but almost unattainable pursuits for an Indian.²⁴ Entitled “Two Should Walk Together,” this version of the story differs in several important respects. For example, the main character in the Cherokee version is a sixteen year old male named Wood. Although he, too, sets out on a beautiful spring day, “the path is hard for him to find” because it is “uncleared and hard to keep sight of.” Both his name and the wildness of his path suggest Wood’s affinity (via his Indian-ness) with the state of nature, uncivilized and uncultivated. An elderly female friend informs Wood that “it takes two to walk in harmony,” and recommends that “you should have someone to encourage and help you”; this version does not promise Wood “two *companions*” but instead seems to encourage him toward a romantic coupling with a female helpmeet—a fact which underscores the gender difference between Wood in this version and the unnamed female protagonist of the English-language version. Eventually, Hope does appear, described as “the one who would walk with him.” When she tells Wood that she is “here to comfort you on your journey” and that with her, he will know “peace and joy [such as he has] never known,” Hope sounds more like a human wife than an embodied virtue, however closely those two concepts were meant to mimic each other in the mid-

²⁴ I am extremely grateful to Lisa Stopp and Anna Huckaby of the Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, for their help translating Cherokee articles from the *Rose Bud* into English. I also wish to thank the Graduate School of the University of Maryland for awarding me a QCB Travel Grant to fund my research trip to Oklahoma in July 2001.

nineteenth century. When Hope bounds ahead of him (just as she did in the English-language version), the same small, blue-eyed child appears and announces herself as “Faith” (or “Belief”). The two soon catch up to Hope, just as they did in the other version. By virtue of the age, gender, and racial or ethnic differences between Wood and the blue-eyed Faith, the Cherokee-language version makes it seem that Wood has somehow walked into a story where he does not belong.²⁵ Until his entrance into Heaven at the end (which, as we shall see below, feels rather tacked on), it almost appears that Wood’s story is about finding a white, Christian wife for himself on his journey through the American landscape.

The second major difference from the English text is in the conclusion to the Cherokee version, wherein lies a direct address to the reader and instructions for living:

If you ever feel you should give up, no matter what path you are on, remember Hope and Belief. Traveling with both of these will lead you back to the rays of sunshine and eventually the streets of Heaven, even though there are many unpleasant obstacles on the way.

Finally, we are told, Wood reaches his “destination,” “nervous,” but flanked by his new friends: “They entered the gates of Heaven victorious and crowned with blessings.” The direct address seems designed to make clear to the Indian reader that the tale is an

²⁵ Devon Mihesuah has observed the tendency in the *Wreath* to use blue eyes to epitomize “enlightenment and civilization” (41). She notes that many of the seminarians may have had blue eyes, as their racial and ethnic heritage was often mixed between Native American and white ancestry. In the school, a caste system developed that placed mixed blood girls above full-blooded Cherokees; having white traits and white ancestry made a girl innately closer to the state of achievement and civilization toward which she was supposed to aspire.

exemplum, suggesting both that non-English speaking Cherokee readers would not otherwise understand that the tale is a scriptural parable, and that readers of the English-language version—who did not need such a description—would be so familiar with the genre as to recognize it on their own. The difference is indicative, in other words, of a major division between readers in the *Wreath*'s audience pool—some of whom are familiar with Christian principles and others who are not—and it underscores, finally, the acculturating and even evangelical function of the newspaper in the Cherokee community.

Overall, the differences between these stories make clear that one is a *version* of the other, rather than a simple, word-for-word *translation*: the author of the Cherokee text (for that one probably followed the English-language text, considering its undeniable Christian influences) made very deliberate choices to preserve certain features of the original story and to alter some others. I would argue that the differences between the Cherokee and the English versions are proof of the newspaper's function (and the girls' awareness of that function) in interrogating, if not undermining, the applicability of white Christian values to a Native American audience.

For example, by choosing to make Wood a male character, the author removes the primary similarity which exists in the English-language version between the female seminary reader and the protagonist. The author may be attempting to increase the male audience's imperative toward Christianity (for with Wood's example, male readers may choose to insert themselves into the story). However, she also removes the imperative toward Christianity for any of the Cherokee students at the school who do not yet read in

English. The author's choice, then, directly subverts the newspaper's goal to educate female students in the values taught at the seminary. Consider, too, her decision to alter the goal of the story's plot. In the English-language version, the girl's acceptance of Faith and Hope as her life companions provides both the motivating force of her journey and the moral of her story: her Christian acceptance of faith and hope denotes a righteous life, culminating in heavenly reward. By contrast, in the Cherokee-language version, heterosexual marriage is the goal. This version's more age-appropriate interest in sexuality and romance would not have been subversive to the dominant white culture (unless Wood really were looking for a white wife) but perhaps to the dominant *authority* in the seminarians' lives—the teachers and guardians of their chastity. Finally, by including in the text a direct address to her reader, the author makes manifest the idea that newspapers are good for actively engaging and instructing the audience in the knowledge, ideas, and behaviors transmitted there. Less passive than the English-language story "The Two Companions," the Cherokee version, "Two Should Walk Together," encourages readers to question the influence of Christian values upon their lives, challenge the authority figures at the school, and reject passive reading practices in favor of active ones. For the *Wreath* readers who understood both English and Cherokee and could make these comparative evaluations themselves, the differences in these stories would have had even greater impact.

Textual examples from the *Wreath* and visual images of the girls' lives at the Seminary suggest together that Boudinot's *Phoenix* was an important model, sometimes exerting enormous influence upon students' writing practices and other times not,

depending on the varying needs of individual students at different moments in time. For the girls who required a forum to express how well they had absorbed school rules regarding proper etiquette for educated females, or to practice what they had learned about the value of the Bible and Christian morality in Native American life, the *Wreath* emulated the *Phoenix* and provided a primary means of exposition, distribution, and audience. On the other hand, Native American students for whom the rules of white culture and its educational, religious, and other cultural institutions seemed too oppressive had at their disposal a ready-made sounding board on which to post their complaints about teachers (those “impatient, cross, old school ma’am[s]”) and academic subjects, their perplexity over the different codes of “civilized” conduct for boys and girls, and their rather clever manipulation of Christian parables that seem at once genuine translations and purposeful *mistranslations*. Students in this last group, especially, are poised to teach us the greatest lesson about the ways that Boudinot’s early ideas were adopted by female students as they took control of the newspaper at their school, and used it as a vehicle for free speech and for cultivating a political voice to fit their own needs for female self-government and self-sovereignty. Somewhere along the way, the Cherokee Female Seminarians figured out that Boudinot’s two creations could be used to do more than merely help them survive in a white world. The school-newspaper nexus was also the right place for schoolgirls to create themselves, as a part of or apart from the whites’ image of what they should be. Above all, the *Wreath* illustrates that the schoolgirls understood the press and the school to offer them *choices* for behavior and thought; that the positions of schoolgirl or educated female, like those of editor,

journalist, and newspaper reader, each had as a primary defining quality the ability and the imperative to turn the page, write and rewrite the story, and recreate oneself in time for the next installment.

Wynema

Sophia Alice Callahan's 1891 novel, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, draws as well from Boudinot's ideas about the dual role of the school and the newspaper in the lives of Native American girls, and yet there is in these two poles the dim sort of family resemblance that one would expect of ancestors removed by seven decades.²⁶ Both Boudinot and Callahan express support (as do the Cherokee Female Seminary students) for a school system that aims to acculturate and civilize Indians according to white and Christian models. Both emphasize, too, that a primary function of the newspaper in Indian life is to broadcast with a clear voice the otherwise muffled expressions of a fading Native American population, evidence of their noble character, and the injustices

²⁶ In her introduction and notes to the reissue of *Wynema*, Native American literature scholar LaVonne Brown Ruoff writes: "The title of the novel is probably derived from the name given to a Modoc woman who served as liaison between the Modocs and the U.S. government peace commissioners." Ruoff explains that "Winema," whose real name was Toby Riddle, was esteemed by the U.S. commissioners especially after she saved the life of a white commissioner who was scalped and stripped by dissenting Modocs in a surprise attack. The man she saved named her Winema, meaning "Little Woman Chief"; he later wrote of the incident in *Wi-ne-ma (the Woman Chief) and her People* (1876). William Apess's *A Son of the Forest* (1829) may also have been important to the naming of this text. Ruoff points out, in "Early Native American Women Authors: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Sarah Winnemucca, S. Alice Callahan, E. Pauline Johnson, and Zitkala-Ša," that Apess's was the first published autobiography written by an Indian, and was influential upon many later Native American writers (81). That Apess was a missionary increases the chances that Callahan, a devout Christian, knew his work well.

that have been perpetrated against them. Like Boudinot in his “Address,” Callahan attempts to engage the support of a high-minded white audience who would gently “whiten” the Indian population through education (and, also permissible in Callahan’s view, through interracial coupling).²⁷ Simultaneously, she excoriates whites who would slaughter Indians or advocate various measures of Indian removal, from relocation to genocide. However, Callahan breaks most distinctly from Boudinot and the *Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds* writers in the greatly diminished degree of trust that she places in the ability of the missionary-run Native school and press to uplift and save America’s Native populations. Though her novel offers two heroines, an Indian girl and her white schoolteacher, whose personal lives are enriched and intertwined in the school and the press, *Wynema* ultimately evinces little faith that either the newspaper or the school will have any *lasting* impact in preserving a recognizably Indian life and culture. Indeed, in *Wynema*, these institutions are tools for transition rather than uplift, for assimilation (or racial admixture) rather than acculturation (racial integration); the value of the school and the press, according to the novel, is to help smooth the way from a time when Indians are abundant to an inevitable and not-too-distant future when they will not exist at all. The Indian schoolgirl at the convergence of these institutions factors prominently in ushering in the sea change of assimilation.

²⁷ Even her publisher’s 1891 “Preface” prominently featured Callahan’s intention to persuade Indian-friendly whites to take up the slack for their more hostile white brothers and sisters, declaring that “[t]he fact that an Indian, one of the oppressed, desires to plead her cause at a tribunal where judge and jury are chosen from among the oppressors is our warrant for publishing this little volume” (ix).

In Callahan's recently rediscovered novel, a schoolteacher and several newspapers serve simultaneously to educate a young Creek girl named Wynema about the political conflicts with the United States government in which her own and other Indian tribes are embroiled. The education system and the press are also used to instruct Wynema regarding gender-appropriate behavior: during political discussions with her white female schoolteacher, and later with both women's male suitors (including one pro-Indian missionary and one Indian, in a brotherly relationship that recalls Boudinot and Worcester), Wynema learns which responses and reactions are expected of her, as a woman, with regard to printed news of political strife and conflict between Indians and whites (indignation but not rebellion). Too, the simultaneous presence of the school and the press in Wynema's life helps her to achieve what many of Callahan's more separatist Native American contemporaries—Zitkala-Ša, Sarah Winnemucca, and E. Pauline Johnson—would also argue is one of the most important goals of Native American female education: Wynema learns that she must read between the lines that are written by others, to assess critically printed representations of the white and Native cultures in which she participates, and to understand with increasing acuity that the newspaper reports and school lessons she receives are not *the truth* so much as someone's *version of the truth* (Ruoff 81-111).²⁸ In Callahan's articulation, one goal of female schooling may

²⁸ Ruoff offers here readings of these authors' most important and relatively well-known texts, including Schoolcraft's contributions to the literary magazine she edited with her husband, called *Muzzeneegun* (or *The Literary Voyager*); Winnemucca's *Life Among the Piutes*; Callahan's *Wynema*; Johnson's poetry that was published in a variety of magazines, but especially her volume, *The White Wampum*; and Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories* (among others).

well be to make the girls fit into white culture, but it is also to make them more politically astute and to give them a critical facility and consciousness as they assimilate into and participate in both cultures. Newspaper writing helps present for the schoolgirl's evaluation the different ideas and values that are available to Native American females from both cultures, and to help her pick and choose which ones to keep, and which to discard.²⁹ In the novel's ambivalent conclusion, Callahan articulates a hope, however faint, that the seminary and the press will work in the near future to promote an even more equitable and happy coexistence between Indian and white peoples. In her idyllic portrait of a mixed community of whites and Indians, schools and the press provide occasions for the two groups peacefully to discuss their differences, their shared goals, and their shared history. The most far-reaching consequence of these discussions, though, lie within their function as social events, designed to provide courtship opportunities that will, by encouraging marriage (and, by extension, childbirth), ease the full-blood Indian out of existence. Callahan thus revises Boudinot's ideas about what newspaper writing "is, does, and is good for" so that, in the Native presses and schools of the fictional 1870s

²⁹ As many of the novel's critics would agree, it is deeply unfortunate that Callahan is finally content to see the Indian characters discarding much of their own cultural heritage in favor of white institutions of religion, education, and information. To her credit, though, the white culture that Callahan advocates as a model for her white and Indian readers is founded on missionary principles, aimed at relieving suffering and preventing murder, while nevertheless equating increased civilization with increased whiteness. I would argue that, by offering her schoolgirl character the opportunity to learn how to read with a critical eye the world around her, and thereby make a choice to adopt the white culture, she is in some way trying to empower Indians. Rather than having white ways forced upon her, Wynema seems genuinely to want to "improve" herself by adopting Genevieve's world view. It is significant that Genevieve's world view is good hearted and not murderous, even if it does see Native American culture (and religion) as inferior to white culture.

through the 1890s, news writing no longer functions to preserve Indian culture and promote white culture in any wholesale way, but on the contrary to eliminate Indian culture by systematically talking it out of existence.

Thus, though the school and the newspaper are clearly important to Callahan's text, we would do well not to overstate the case she makes in the novel regarding the long-range preservative value of either formal education or the press. In fact, the novel does not explicitly foreground either institution, centering instead around two interwoven plot lines driven by sentimental and romantic conventions, and the historically fraught relationship between the United States government and various Indian nations. The first plot line traces the personal and intercultural relationships that develop between Wynema, her white teacher Miss Genevieve Weir (whose first name means "white wave," and whose presence in Wynema's life certainly does have a whitewashing effect), and their several suitors. As Wynema helps Genevieve acclimate to the Indian culture in which she teaches, and as Genevieve helps Wynema assimilate into the white culture which she models for her students, their relationship is transformed from teacher and student to friend and friend, and, ultimately, to sisters-in-law (for Wynema marries Genevieve's brother). The troubles they endure together, too—such as their individual difficulties acclimating to these new cultures, and their mutual distress over the plight of the Indians—helps them to bond together as *women*, made more similar by their gender than they are made different by their racial categories. As LaVonne Brown Ruoff has noted, Callahan maintains around her women characters the boundaries that characterize much women's fiction of the middle and late nineteenth century: both Wynema and

Genevieve are, as Nina Baym has observed of the period's heroines, "beset with hardships, but find within [themselves] the qualities of intelligence, will, resourcefulness, and courage sufficient to overcome them."³⁰ What is most unique about their relationship, though, is that it develops across racial and cultural lines and, we will see below, as a result of their shared interest in education, political events, and newspaper reading. Thus, it transcends the more characteristic domestic bonds that frequently marked women's relationships in antebellum sentimental fiction and situates the novel more squarely within the expanded parameters for women's fiction of the later nineteenth century.

A second plot line overlaps with the first and involves the relationship between the Muskogee Indian nation (and occasionally other tribes) and the United States government. More than mere historical backdrop, the conflicts over allotment, Indian Removal policies, and the Indian War of the Northwest are major preoccupations of the novel's main characters. Reported in the local and national newspapers, these events and conflicts are discussed at length by Wynema, Genevieve, and their beaus. Generally speaking, in these conversations Genevieve shows herself to be quite knowledgeable about Indian-white political affairs (and yet altogether ignorant of Indian tribal custom), and she leads her young student, Wynema, to understand how the white government has cheated and continues to cheat the Native American. The educational institution, therefore, provides the context for her characters' relationships, so central to the novel's plots. Within this context characters discuss and display their political allegiances, which

³⁰ This passage from Baym's *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870* (1978) is quoted in Ruoff's introduction to *Wynema*, xxi.

lead them to marriage and, importantly, in Wynema's case, intermarriage. Ultimately, it is implied that these marriages will hasten breeding out of Indian blood. Crucial as the institutions of the press and the school may be, these institutions are always blurry in the background of the main plot lines. Only a handful of chapters involve discussions of the press at all, and although Wynema's relationship with her white schoolteacher is the primary relationship in the novel, Wynema's education at the hands of this schoolteacher, with writing at its center, is not explicitly thematized.

I want to foreground and theorize here the relationship of this Native schoolgirl to the press and to her school by examining the trajectory of Wynema's education as a reader over the course of Callahan's tale. I agree with the novel's critics that *Wynema* is a deeply flawed text: it lacks cohesion, fails to develop characters convincingly, and suffers in places from the same pandering tone as Boudinot's "Address," directed as it is toward a similar audience of white philanthropist readers whom the author wants to persuade to contribute funds and moral support. Indeed, as Siobhan Senier has observed, "*Wynema* does strike one as a rather haphazardly constructed and even racist book," citing as evidence its "hastily executed" multiple plot lines and its "failure to produce [a tribal or nationalist] discourse" that "would show indigenous peoples and institutions as viable and enduring" (423). However, to discount the novel entirely on these bases would be to miss an opportunity to explore the earliest treatment of Native American female education in existence in American literature and, as already noted, the first novel ever published by a Native American woman. Attending to the path that Wynema travels, in particular, from illiteracy to immersion in newspaper culture can help us to understand

the schoolgirl's role in the demise of her culture that Callahan's novel anticipates. My interest in this novel therefore stems from the several chapters in *Wynema* that directly engage the relationship of the schoolgirl to her school—represented here by Genevieve—as well as to newspaper journalism. What is striking about these textual moments is that the subjects of the news articles and conversations between characters are strictly political: there is none of the emphasis on “Beauty,” “Temperance,” or “Kindness” that we witnessed on the pages of the *Wreath*, nor are there mentioned essays on “Female Delicacy” such as in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and other “home papers” from various Indian nations. Rather, the news articles discussed in *Wynema*—each ascribed to real, not fictional, newspapers—have to do with issues of land allotment and per-capita payments that were promised but never made to the Indians by the American government, the exploitation of Native American individuals by white men like Buffalo Bill Hickock, and the deception practiced by both whites and Natives against Sitting Bull in the Indian War of the Northwest. In some cases, as well, newspaper reports are tested against oral narratives, Native eyewitness accounts of these historic events, which differ significantly from the accounts printed in the popular press.

The novel's treatment of these issues, as they are represented in newspapers and through oral narrative, indicates Callahan's fascination with print as well as her deep distrust of written culture. Both of these attitudes are evinced by Wynema herself, who develops (rather too quickly) from a “lispings” and illiterate “little savage”(1), to a wide-eyed reader who trusts entirely the printed word, to a more skeptical and discerning consumer of texts, and finally to a kind of translator, comparing the representations of

narratives and facts across newspapers and verbal tales in several different Indian languages (Creek, Sioux) as well as English. In the character of Wynema, Callahan offers an ingenue, in many ways an idealized Native American student of the written word. Over the course of the first few chapters, under the tutelage of Genevieve and white male missionary, Gerald Keithly, Wynema matures from a tiny child with very poor English skills to a well-spoken, adolescent Victorian lady-in-the-making. Of the growing Wynema, Genevieve writes home:

She learns faster and retains more of what she learns than any child of whatever hue it has been my fortune to know. She is a constant reader and greets a new book with the warmth of a friend. I have directed her course of reading, and I venture to say, there is not a child in Mobile or anywhere else who has read less spurious matter than she. It is amusing to see her curl up over Dickens or Scott, and grow animated over Shakespeare, whose plays she lives out; and it is interesting to watch the different emotions, in sympathy with the various characters, chase each other over her face. Of the good ones she will say, ‘This is you, Mihia, but you are better.’ Dear child; would that I were as perfect as she believes me to be! (23)

Genevieve’s early report sets up Wynema as a sort of child prodigy whose relationship to the written word is all-absorbing, emotional, thrilling, and creative, but not exactly intellectually rigorous and not precisely self-motivated. Like the Indian in Boudinot’s “Address,” she is smart and capable, but not a threat in her intellect, not a “giant.” An avid reader, and perhaps also a lonely child, Wynema is eager to feel sympathetic to the

characters in her books, and eager to find those characters who are “good.” She needs Genevieve, whom she continues to call “Mihia” (or “teacher”), to tell her what to read, and, as we shall see, what to *think* about what she reads. Indeed, she fairly worships her white teacher, and poses no subversive challenge whatever to the white institutions that govern her education. Callahan presents for her readers’ delight a Native American student who loves the English books she reads and the characters in them; she also creates a character for whom the process of learning to read critically is absolutely essential to her own survival. Easily taken by appearances and enthralled by sweet-talking characters, the guileless girl has no idea how to distinguish between the way things seem and the very different way they may truly be.

It should be clear by now that I do not believe Callahan intended for her Indian character to advocate the total erasure of Indian life. Though separatist critic Craig Womack asserts that the novel is an anti-Indian, “assimilationist and Christian supremacist tract,” I find Callahan sincere in her belief, so like Boudinot’s, that assimilation is the only real option for ensuring the survival of actual, living people, if not the future of the race and culture (Womack 109-10). Callahan herself clearly embraced both the press and the school, having had much contact throughout her girlhood with Native American newspapers and educated “mixed bloods.” Born in 1868 in Sulphur Springs, Texas, Alice Callahan was raised in an aristocratic, mixed-blood family that, it would seem fair to say, was a mass of contradictions. Her heritage was both white and Creek, and her family sympathized with the plight of the Indians though they also sought heartily to rise above the status of the “full bloods”; just as

contradictorily, her father, Samuel Benton Callahan, owned slaves before the Civil War, and yet he purportedly opposed slavery (Ruoff xiv). Little is known about Alice's own life, and especially her first 17 years, which she spent in Sulphur Springs before her father moved the family to Okmulgee, Indian Territory in 1886 or 87. There, he was active in business, as a hotel proprietor; in politics, as a clerk in the House of Kings—the Creek nation's equivalent to the U.S. Senate; and in newspaper work, as the editor of the *Indian Journal*, “one of the most important newspapers in the Creek nation, and comparable to the *Cherokee Advocate* in significance” (Murphy 47).³¹

Indeed, Alice's personal history emerges only in relation to her educational experiences as teacher, student, and newspaper editor. After the move to Okmulgee and for the remainder of her life, Alice would play all three of these roles, sometimes intermittently and sometimes simultaneously. In 1886, she taught at Okmulgee, and in 1887 and 88, she herself took classes at the Wesleyan Female Academy in Staunton, Virginia. The year she published *Wynema*, 1891, found her teaching again at the Harrell International Institute, and editing the Methodist newspaper *Our Brother in Red*.³² By

³¹ One of the main reasons for this paper's significance is that it was established by the International Printing Company, whose members included tribesmen from all of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole). Their decision to incorporate the printing company and then create a newspaper vehicle that would be “devoted to the interests of the Indian race” suggests how thoroughly the tribes had come to understand the need to join forces and present a unified media campaign that would defend and protect their common interests.

³² This newspaper was affiliated with Harrell and did print some student pieces, but it was otherwise not student-written. The *Harrell Monthly* (also called *Our Monthly*), was a school paper reflecting the Methodist teachings of the school. *Our Brother in Red*, a Muskogee paper with a somewhat wider distribution had a similarly strong Christian influence and occasionally printed exemplary student pieces among its columns.

1892-3, Callahan was teaching at Wealaka Boarding School for Muskogee Children, for which her father served as superintendent. In the early months of 1893, Alice wrote a letter to a friend, expressing her disappointment over how health problems at Wealaka had prevented the printing of the school newspaper which she and her students had worked so hard to produce: “Our paper *Wealaka Wit and Wisdom* came out last week, but as our press was out of fix and our printers had the sore eyes, we got out but two copies” (rpt. in Foreman 312).³³ Still, she expresses in her letter great pleasure in her teaching profession and her teaching colleagues:

My classes are much more interesting & pleasanter than they were before. I have four I like real well: i e , Mental philosophy, Mythology, Physics, Geography and Algebra.....We have a much nicer set of girls than we have ever had before. And the teachers! Oh, that's just the best of all!

Indeed, the letter emphasizes Alice’s desire to finish her own education and open “a school of my own” (312). Unfortunately, she would never get the chance to do either. On January 7, 1894, Callahan succumbed to an attack of pleurisy and died at the age of 26.

During her life, then, Alice lived perhaps more like Genevieve—the itinerant white teacher who sympathized with the Indian—than like Wynema, the gifted but unusual Creek heroine of her novel. Like Genevieve, Callahan was well-read, devoutly Christian, and had been “surrounded by the luxuries of a Southern home” (4). What is perhaps so striking, then, is how *well* her novel advocates on behalf of the Indians,

³³ It is unclear just what kind of medical problem caused the students’ “sore eyes,” however it is likely that some contagious infection plagued the school at this time as it had in many other instances.

despite its author's personal distance from the lived reality of the full-blood Creeks she fights to help. Whereas *Our Brother in Red* and the *Harrell Monthly*—two newspapers for which Callahan wrote—disallowed articles of a secular or a political nature (Murphy 62), her novel dares to take on worldly, polemical concerns, and aspires to compensate for the dearth of Indian voices in the press, as compared to the plethora of anti-Indian viewpoints so vehemently expressed in many white newspapers. Thus, her narrator describes, for example, the representation by white newspapers of the losses suffered in the Indian War of the Northwest:

With a few slight skirmishes, the papers say, only the death of a few “Indian bucks,” the war of the Northwest ended.

“But,” you ask, my reader, “did not the white people undergo any privations? Did not the United States army lose two brave commanders and a number of privates?” Oh, yes. So the papers tell us; but I am not relating the brave (?) deeds of the white soldier. They are already flashed over the world by electricity; great writers have burned the midnight oil telling their story to the world. It is not my province to show how brave it was for a great, strong nation to quell a riot caused by the dancing of a few ‘bucks’—for *civilized* soldiers to slaughter indiscriminately, Indian women and children. Doubtless it was brave, for so public opinion tells us, and it cannot err. But what will the annals of history handed down to future generations disclose to them? Will history term the treatment of the Indians by the United States Government, right and honorable?

Ah, but that does not affect my story! It is the Indian's story—his chapter of wrongs and oppression. (92-3)

Callahan's use of sarcasm here ("Doubtless it was brave...") reveals her anger toward many whites who both participated in the slaughter of Indians, and who reject the truth about the number of Indian lives lost in the battle. Yet this passage also indicates the remedy that Callahan most fervently believed would help to right the wrongs done to the Muscogee and Sioux populations. By competing with the white press, whose writers have "flashed" their questionably "brave deeds" "all over the world by electricity," Callahan wants her novel to do political battle, and to correct for posterity the history of the Indian before his chapter draws to an inevitable close.

This passage also points to the reasons why Callahan displays such a great deal of anxiety over Wynema's reading practices once this character matures enough to consume (ostensibly) non-fictional, historical texts like newspaper reports. Staging frequent competition between oral and written narratives, and between white and Indian narratives, Callahan always privileges either the Indian point of view, or the side of a conflict that would, in her assimilationist opinion, most benefit the Indian population; however, she is quick also to provide opposing viewpoints in every case, indicating an unease with the way that newspapers validate, by virtue of being printed in a respected publication, every opinion that is expressed on their pages. Though her own novel is intended to record the Indian's "chapter of wrongs and oppression" at the hands of whites, and its truth is meant to be taken at face value, Callahan also warns that most Native American readers can be easily duped by the conventions of writing with which

they are unfamiliar, or tricked into believing some article merely because it is printed and published, and she presents Wynema as an example of the Indian reader who is at first misled (“dazzled” might be a more appropriate word) by printed texts, but who eventually comes to understand how they work. I would argue that Wynema’s development as a reader and consumer of stories embodies the most substantial articulation of the role that Callahan wanted writing, through school and the press, to play in Native American life. In this respect, especially, Callahan displays a much more nuanced appreciation than Boudinot did (especially early on in his career) for the educational function of the newspaper and the educational value of teachers who instruct new readers to distinguish between verity and deception.

Genevieve’s own strategy for teaching Wynema is therefore an important consideration in our examination of the girl’s education as a reader. On the few occasions in the novel where news articles are discussed—and we will look closely at these scenes in a moment—Wynema does learn to read with a more critical eye. As she matures, Wynema sets aside poetry and stage plays for the real-life drama that is printed in newspaper columns throughout the Creek nation and across the United States. Through Wynema’s experiences misreading some of these texts, Callahan demonstrates the important lesson that tone is more easily conveyed and understood when a speaker is present and a listener (or “reader”) can rely on facial and aural cues, as well as body language, as a context for meaning and a gauge of sincerity. Though all words are never created equal, this seems more true for printed words than for spoken ones, where tone can be more easily misread, misleading the reader; and though some persons are better

than others at lying, the written word can be particularly difficult to read *through* for truth or falsehood.

In Chapter 13, for example, Wynema and Genevieve discuss the question of land allotment, which they have read about in various newspapers and heard spoken about in the community of Indians and whites to which they belong. Written several years after the passage of the U.S. Government's 1887 Dawes Severalty Act, which allotted or distributed parcels of (stolen) land to Indians in exchange for citizenship, the chapter represents in a nutshell the debates that preceded Dawes' passage. Callahan voices the opinions of those who felt that the Dawes Act would provide Indians with some measure of restitution for the lands that had been taken away from them during Removal, and would "give Indians a pride in their own land that will encourage them to become farmers rather than continue living as hunters and fishers," thus giving them further impetus toward civilized society (Ruoff xxxv). Through the Indian girl, she expresses the opinion that "so many idle, shiftless Indians who do nothing but hunt and fish" would, "knowing the land to be their own...have pride enough to cultivate their land and build up their homes" (51). On the other hand, through Genevieve, she also represents the perspective of those who felt that the Dawes Act, which required Indians to become citizens of the United States in exchange for the rights, protections, and obligations of "Americans," would suddenly and unfairly subject the Indian people to laws and

concepts with which they were unfamiliar (such as land ownership), and would therefore entrap Indians in legal battles over land that they were unlikely to win.³⁴

Over the course of portraying Wynema's development as a reader, Callahan creates opportunities to articulate her own political views. More importantly for our purposes, though, she also equates education with political awareness, and lays out a method for teaching the Indian child to read and understand newspaper representations of urgent political import for the Indian population. Callahan's method, ascribed here to Genevieve, relies heavily on the Indian child's emotional attachment to her teacher, and on "the gradual unfolding of [Wynema's] mind and soul to the touch of her magic wand—the influence of love opening doors that giant force could not set the least ajar" (23). As the chapter opens, Genevieve is reading a news report about allotment when Wynema, who had been out walking, enters to find her distressed. The scene foregrounds Wynema's clear ability to "read" the person standing before her, and it also points up her inability (she is, as yet, untutored in this skill) to read between the lines of a written text.

'What is it you are reading, Mihia, that you look so troubled?' queried Wynema coming in one afternoon from a stroll she had taken with Robert and Bessie, and looking very pretty with her bright, merry eyes and rosy cheeks. She

³⁴ Indians became American citizens as soon as they received their land allotment: "And every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States to whom allotments shall have been made under the provisions of this act, or under any law or treaty, and every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States who has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life, is hereby declared to be a citizen of the United States, and is entitled to all the rights, privileges and immunities of such citizens..." (Dawes Act, Section 6).

came and looked over her friend's shoulder in a loving way. 'Oh, what a long article!' drawing down her face. 'Shall we allot? allot what? Oh, that is a home paper! Surely it cannot mean allot our country?' (50)

Here, Wynema does not appear so eager to read lengthy newspaper articles, but to use her "bright, merry eyes" to read instead the face of her friend and instructor, over whose shoulder she peers "in a loving way." When Genevieve explains that the article in the "home paper" or Indian-nation paper (as opposed to white-run news media) does mean precisely to debate the issue of land allotment, though, Wynema is all ears. Eager to understand what is written in the paper—perhaps as much to know what is troubling her beloved teacher and friend as to be informed upon a subject affecting "our country"—and yet unable or unwilling to discern by herself the full ramifications of the allotment issue or what is at stake within the debate, Wynema continues to ply Genevieve with questions for clues about what she should believe.

Genevieve explains that though allotment has been a subject of debate for a long time in Indian country, the "matter assumes a serious aspect" presently because "even the part-blood Indians are in favor" of the United States government's plan to divide Indian lands, and "if the Indians do not stand firmly against [this plan], I fear they will yet be homeless" (50). In reply, Wynema expresses her own thoughts on the issue, but repeatedly checks herself against Genevieve's reaction to see if she is learning correctly. We have already looked at some of what Wynema has to say; here, what is important is the self-doubt that frames her opinion and springs from the emotional attachment Genevieve has fostered in her student.

“See! This is the way I see the matter. If I am wrong, correct me. There are so many idle, shiftless Indians who do nothing but hunt and fish; then there are others who are industrious and enterprising; so long as our land remains as a whole, in common, these lazy Indians will never make a move toward cultivating it;...if the land were allotted, do you not think that these idle Indians, knowing the land to be their own, would have pride enough to cultivate their land and build up their homes? *It seems so to me;*” and she looked earnestly at Genevieve, awaiting her reply. (51, my emphasis)

Clearly, Wynema has internalized the point of view of the white newspapers she reads, and the stereotypes of “lazy” and “idle Indians” they frequently contained. She is eager to demonstrate to her teacher how well she has absorbed the lessons of those white papers, but also to receive confirmation that those lessons are good ones.

The brilliance of Genevieve’s own response has, to my mind, little to do with her political opposition to allotment and much to do with her strategy of instructing Wynema by repeating and reflecting back to the girl her own mistaken ideas—a strategy we will see again, in a somewhat different permutation, in my next chapter. “I had not thought of the matter in the way you present it,” suggests Genevieve, “though that is the view many congressmen and editors take of it” (51). By not passing judgement, the teacher leaves open for further analysis this opposing viewpoint. She portrays Wynema’s opinion as having political clout, presented in the same manner and with the same relevance as statesmen and newsmen alike. In fact, it may as well be printed alongside those columns in the very newspaper they are perusing. In this vein, Genevieve continues:

Then again in support of your theory that allotment will be best, this paper says the Indians *must* allot, to protect themselves against the U.S. Government, and suggests that the more civilized apply for statehood; for it says ‘if the protection provided for in treaties be insufficient, more certain protection should be secured.’ Another paper says, ‘Gen. Noble, Secretary of the Interior...suggests that the period now allowed a tribe to determine whether it will receive allotment be placed under the control of the President, so that it may be shortened if *tribes give no attention to the subject or cause unreasonable delays*; and discountenances the employment of attorneys by the Indians to aid in negotiation with, or to prosecute claims against the government.’ This sounds like the lands will be allotted whether the Indians like or no. I cannot see the matter as it has been presented by you, and as these papers advocate it...” (51-2)

Again aligning Wynema’s viewpoint with other anti-Indian voices, Genevieve resists chiding Wynema. Instead, she allows the girl to perceive the logical extension of her own, flawed beliefs and guides her to draw what seem to Wynema to be her own conclusions. As a result, she must own responsibility for the opposing position in which this disagreement will place her with regard to her beloved teacher, and by extension, the distanced position in which it places the Indian with respect to benevolent, if paternalistic (or, in this case, *maternalistic*), whites. “Genevieve was so intensely earnest that she had risen and was pacing the room, her hands clasped together, her brows knit. Wynema, who seldom saw her in such moods, was frightened, and reproached herself with having been the cause of it.”

"Oh, I am so sorry, dear Mihia—so sorry I was so foolish! Pray, forgive me! It is always the way with me, and I dare say I should be one of the first to sell myself out of house and home;" And the girl hung her head, looking the picture of humiliation.

"No, dear, I am the one to ask forgiveness for needlessly disturbing you so. Now go along and enjoy yourself, for I dare say nothing will come of all this;" and Genevieve kissed her friend, hoping that she might never have cause to be less light-hearted than at present. (53)

In the end, Genevieve and Wynema share the same viewpoint, not because the teacher has told her student what to think, but because she has required her student to evaluate the ramifications of her own opinions, to justify the practical impact they might have upon the world around her and the emotional impact they have upon her teacher and friend.

Later in the novel, as Wynema matures, so do her critical reading faculties. In Chapter 22, "Is This Right?," Wynema demonstrates how well she understands irony and sarcasm, not only by employing this sophisticated rhetorical strategy herself, but also by expressing appreciation for it in the printed news. Callahan illustrates Wynema's appreciation of tone by incorporating references to an actual news article into her fiction. Talking with Robin Weir—Genevieve's brother and, by this point in the novel, Wynema's husband—she declares: "'Robin, there was such a scathing criticism of the part the United States Government has taken against the Indians of the Northwest, in the

St. Louis Republic. I put the paper away to show you, but it has gotten misplaced. The substance of the article was this:"

[T]he writer commended the Government on its slaughter of the Indians, and recommended that the dead bodies of the savages be used for fertilizers instead of the costly guano Mr. Blaine had been importing. He said the Indians alive were troublesome and expensive, for they would persist in getting hungry and cold; but the Indians slaughtered would be useful, for besides using their carcasses...the land they are now occupying could then be given as homes to the "homeless whites." I don't believe I ever read a more sarcastic, ironical article in any newspaper. I should like to shake hands with the writer, for I see he is a just, unprejudiced, thinking man, who believes in doing justice even to an Indian "buck." (97)³⁵

Compared to the earlier scene in which Wynema expressed so much uncertainty regarding her own interpretive abilities, and first learned to appreciate the newspaper as a vehicle for communicating and communing with others in her social and emotional sphere, here Wynema expresses readerly competence and confidence, appropriately evaluating the article as "scathing," "sarcastic," and "ironical," and demonstrating that she had read it carefully and thoroughly enough to be able to paraphrase its most salient points. It is significant that Wynema has, as an adult, "replaced" Genevieve with her brother (and now implicitly seeks Robin's approval and emotional acceptance), for while

³⁵ LaVonne Brown Ruoff has tracked down the actual newspaper article that Wynema misplaced. See the *St. Louis Republic*, 16 December 1890.

Genevieve and Wynema could only mirror one another in their similar opinions about Native-white relations, Wynema and her white husband have the potential to go a step further in achieving assimilation: they can have a child. (They do not do so within the plot of the novel itself, however it is suggested at the end of Callahan's text that children may be in the couple's future.) Also importantly, Wynema perceives the writer's work as a sign of his character—he is a “just, unprejudiced, thinking man”—and this makes her feel connected to him as a human being. Thus, in addition to learning that newspaper writing can bring together communities of readers, Wynema learns that it can also ally readers and authors who may be of different ethnicities or races, but who share the same core ideals and values.

Conclusion

In a similar fashion the figures and texts I examine in this chapter, from three different historical moments, are also joined. Boudinot's argument that newspapers and schools were necessary for the survival of Native peoples may not have anticipated the precise ways in which later generations of Native schoolgirls would utilize these two institutions (or interpret the concept of Native survival: Does a people survive if its cultural identity does not? Does a people survive via the preservation of individual lives, and the perpetuation of those lives via their offspring?). However, the self-styled Cherokee Rose Buds and the fictional schoolgirl in Callahan's novel each wrangle with the ways in which the institutions of school and newspaper might bring them together with—or separate them from—other readers and writers, and serve the ends of

acculturation or assimilation. For the Cherokee National Female Seminary students in the 1850s, writing for the school newspaper allowed them to create and flesh out for themselves both Native American and white identities, to align themselves with the school and thereby partake in its ability to effect change in their culture (as when they penned articles aimed at recruiting new students and “improving” the uneducated Indians), and also to distance themselves from it (as when they published complaints about their teachers and course work). Crucial to their forays in journalism is a consistent effort to use the newspaper forum as a means of conceiving, publicly, what it will mean to be an educated, adult female, once their schooldays are through. As we have seen, many of the extant articles from the *Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds* envision some blending of the traits of adult, white True Womanhood with what is, in *their* imaginings, the more self-governing, “outsider” traits of the adolescent Cherokee female. Writing for the *Wreath* clearly afforded these students many opportunities to straddle and occupy a number of social positions (white and Native, adolescent and adult) that might otherwise have been perceived or portrayed as mutually exclusive of one another. Taken together, their articles portray a culture of letters that uses writing both to delineate the boundaries of those social positions and to maximize the number of social positions that one may inhabit.

Callahan’s text shifts the emphasis from newspaper writing to newspaper reading, which accentuates the capacity of the printed word for uniting people around a set of received ideas and promoting discussion about them, their relevance for the community, their truth or untruth. In *Wynema*, the newspaper is a kind of bridge between the

schoolgirl and her white mentor, facilitating their communication about white-Native relations and U.S. government-Cherokee government relations. But the newspaper also gives Wynema herself opportunities to act as a bridge when her multilingual skills allow her to read and translate news articles from several different communities that had otherwise been divided by language and culture. As a female living in the somewhat utopian, mixed community of Cherokees and white missionaries, Wynema learns that females can use newspapers to help preserve their Native language and convey a Native point of view to non-Natives while exploring the many different points of view (hostile toward Native Americans? sympathetic and friendly?) expressed by whites in *their* newspapers. Though Callahan is subtle on this point, it is important to note that she offers up another possible bridging role for Wynema—that of potential mother to a mixed race child—and yet subsumes that role beneath the less traditional position of newspaper translator, and facilitator of conversation between whites and Native Americans. As with the Cherokee Rose Buds, who also only dimly conceive of their adult lives as mothers, Wynema learns from the institutional relationship between the school and the newspaper that females can serve themselves and their Native cultures by vocalizing, in their own language and in English, their concerns for the preservation and perpetuation of their people, and their desires to work and live harmoniously with whites.

My next chapter takes up some of these same issues, though we shift focus from Native American schoolgirls in the 1850s and 1890s toward Frances E. W. Harper's fictional account of an African-American schoolgirl living in post-Reconstruction Philadelphia. Harper's novel is serialized in an African-American newspaper—a form

which aims at encouraging readers to discuss each installment of the story, and collectively imagine its development and resolution. The main character, as we shall see, is also a talented writer (modeled after Harper herself) who uses her words to portray the plight of her people after slavery. Annette Harcourt also becomes a kind of bridge between the whites and African-Americans in her urban culture, and also between the educated and uneducated African-Americans in her own local neighborhood, and in the South. Though she will, like Wynema, marry at the end of the novel, Harper, like Callahan, does not focus on the wedding, the marriage, or the potential motherhood of her main character. These similarities between mid-to-late century Native American and African-American schoolgirl portraits pose important questions about the extent to which non-white cultures trusted their girls to white institutions, as well as about how the larger project of female education changed over the course of the nineteenth century.

Chapter Four

“How shall we ever get out of slavery?”: Frances E. W. Harper’s *Trial and Triumph* and Black Female Education in the Post-Reconstruction Era

Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted, Frances E. W. Harper’s best-known novel (1892), outlines a concise history of African-American education, beginning with the period just prior to the Civil War and ending in the midst of Reconstruction. Moving from barely literate slavery days through a cultural moment of enlightened, political *conversazione* among a free black intellectual elite, the text traces a sweeping arc over more than three decades of African-American life. As her narrative unfolds from South to North and back again, Harper alights briefly on several important scenarios in black education, illuminating an array of figures whose spotty and arbitrary achievements in learning reflect the struggles of many African-Americans to elevate themselves during this period. In Tom Anderson and Robert Johnson, for example, Harper memorializes slaves who bravely and illegally taught themselves to read, or who, having been taught by white masters, spread literacy surreptitiously among their fellow bondsmen. In the education of Iola’s mother, Marie Leroy, by her owner (and future husband), Harper acknowledges slave masters who, however rarely, sent their slaves to Northern schools in preparation for freedom. In Iola and her brother, Harry, she shows how those masters sometimes passed their racially-mixed offspring as white, educating them at white

schools with the intention of keeping from their children the pain of their “connection with the negro race” (71). On the other hand, in Reverend Carmicle and Lucille Delaney she also portrays darker-skinned blacks who attended school, even college, *as* blacks, and ultimately distinguished themselves as professionals and community leaders. Though her novel ends with the oft-quoted author’s note that “the race has not had very long to straighten its hands from the hoe...and to erect above the ruined auction-block and slave-pen institutions of learning,” still it anticipates a time beyond the scope of the book when “the negro’s rising brain” will collectively achieve the progress Harper charts in these individuals (212).

As several critics have already noted, Harper installs educated African-American females at the forefront of the wide-scale uplift she envisions in *Iola Leroy* (Carby 69-70, Ernest 506, Peterson “Further Liftings” 102-3). Indeed, though in that novel she applauds *all* of her characters’ contributions to uplifting the race—including the efforts of unschooled women like Aunt Linda and Jinnie, and educated men such as Reverend Carmicle, Frank Latimer, and Harry Leroy—only those women who have been formally educated possess the essential combination of “devising brain and feeling heart” that Harper perceives as key to the cultivation of “the moral and spiritual faculties destined to play the most important part in our [race’s] future development” (“A Factor in Human Progress” 275-76).¹ Apparently, in this novel, formal schooling supplements the African-American female’s innate ethical and emotional sensitivity by sharpening her intellect

¹ See also Harper’s 1878 speech, “Coloured Women of America” reprinted in Foster’s *A Brighter Coming Day*, 271-75. See similar language in *Iola Leroy*, pps.177, 185, and 191.

with practical skills and information. Immersion in the school system, too, endows her with a model for gaining and imparting knowledge, and impasses her to raise herself and others out of the ignorance and degradation imposed by slavery.² Thus, during the novel's culminating salon programme, Iola's speech on "The Education of Mothers" and Lucille's reading of the religious poem, "A Rallying Cry," neatly illustrate the influence educated women can exert over their community by speaking publicly and eloquently to other community leaders on matters of piety and domesticity.³ Most crucially, both women's professionalization as teachers at the end of the novel demonstrates their continuing commitment and devotion to "do something of lasting service for the race," such as using their own educational advantages to erect permanent "institutions of learning" "above the ruined auction block and slave-pen" (197, 212). According to *Iola Leroy*, the ideal result of black female education is someone like Iola or Lucille who readily exploits the uplift function of the school, seizing upon the potential value of the institution to teach trades, increase literacy, and sever the long-standing association between being black and being ignorant.

Given *Iola Leroy*'s large background cast of African-American characters seeking instruction, and its duo of female protagonists learning and teaching in formal educational settings, it is evident that Harper meant for her novel to portray "the great need of education for the colored people" in general (144), and to demonstrate the

² See especially pages 64, 111, 164, 176, 188, 191, 194 in *Iola Leroy*, for specific references to the role of the educated female in racial uplift.

³ "A Rallying Cry" is ascribed to another fictional female in the novel, but in fact penned by Harper herself and published in the *Christian Recorder* in 1891.

importance of female race leaders in particular (191). Certainly, this emphasis squares with the best-known details of Harper's life and work.⁴ As Frances Smith Foster avers, the broad "life goal" unifying all of Harper's work for more than six decades—as a student, teacher, writer, orator, and activist—was to prescribe education as a kind of alchemical trick converting every individual's resources to "the building up of 'true men and true women' who would make every gift, whether gold or talent, fortune or genius, subserve the cause of crushed humanity and carry out...the glorious idea of human brotherhood" (Foster, *MS* xiv). While she was a child and adolescent in the 1830s and 40s, Harper enrolled in her uncle's Baltimore, Maryland school, The William Watkins Academy for Negro Youth, and absorbed a blend of high academic standards and devotion to Christian service, and she developed aspirations toward social leadership and political advocacy that she would teach her own students in Ohio and Pennsylvania in the 1850s (Boyd 36-8; Foster, *Brighter* 7-8). These ideals carried over into speeches and essays she authored before and after the Civil War, through which Harper lobbied to increase the educational opportunities that would allow blacks to demonstrate (and whites, the chance to witness) that abilities are neither lessened nor increased according to skin color.⁵ Though her live audiences and readers included whites as well as blacks, evidence suggests that Harper's enormous popularity and influence as a lecturer were

⁴ Unfortunately, little record of Harper's life survives. Foster notes that most biographical material on Harper comes from a single source, one thirty-page chapter in William Still's 1871 *The Underground Rail Road* (Foster, *Brighter* 5).

⁵ See especially "The Colored People in America" (1857), "The Great Problem to be Solved" (1875), and "Coloured Women of America" (1878).

due, in large part, to her particular recognition of her African-American audiences' "receptivity to guidelines for achieving their ideals" of racial equality, and to what William Wells Brown called the "forcible," "fervent," and "soul-stirring" style with which she expressed in speech and print the fundamental need for the black community to foster the development of moral, self-sacrificing men and women (Foster, *Brighter* 15, 25). But, as William Still's 1892 introduction to *Iola Leroy* confirms, Harper's greatest personal interest was "in meetings called exclusively for [black] women" who most needed role models and clear patterns for their relatively new lives as free people: "indeed," Still writes, "she felt their needs were far more pressing than any other class" (3-4). That Iola and Lucille share Harper's goals establishes their function not only as stand-ins for the author, but also as model characters to be emulated. Claudia Tate calls them "spokeswomen" for what Harper felt should be "the central ambition of late-nineteenth-century black women—education" (182). Hazel Carby agrees that Iola and Lucille were "created to fulfill" the "role of intellectual black leadership" Harper felt it was her "duty" to inspire (77).

Despite Harper's pointed focus on the salvific place and purpose of the educated female in the black community, several gaping lacunae prevent Iola and Lucille from serving as viable models of race leadership for young African-American female readers living in the post-Reconstruction period during which the novel was published. How, precisely, were Lucille and Iola educated to write and argue so well on behalf of their race? How is the portrait of post-Civil War adult femininity that they embody applicable to the lives of girls and women after Reconstruction? It is, in fact, these lacunae, rather

than *Iola Leroy* itself, which shape my inquiries into several of Harper's earlier and less well-known works in this chapter. For, while I agree with previous critics that Harper's efforts to reach a racially-mixed (but predominantly white) audience with *Iola Leroy* limited the novel's ability to provide a detailed model of black female leadership, I want to recognize Harper's attempts elsewhere to offer less ambiguous, more purposeful guidelines for young black female readers to follow through the critical stage of adolescence and toward the noble womanhood she imagines (Carby 64, Ernest 502, McDowell 285, Peterson 99).

Contending Novels: *Iola Leroy* and *Trial and Triumph*

Thus, I turn here to *Trial and Triumph*—Harper's much neglected 1888-89 serial novel about the education of a young black girl in a post-Reconstruction, Northern, urban, African-American community—to address questions about her vision of African-American female education that are left unanswered by *Iola Leroy* and unexamined in the critical literature on Harper and her most famous work of fiction.⁶ Specifically, I argue that in *Trial and Triumph*, Harper defines a replicable pedagogical strategy through which educated black adults supplement a young African-American girl's formal schooling in order to prepare her to become one of the educated, adult female race leaders so needed by the black community. I contend, furthermore, that unlike *Iola*

⁶ *Trial and Triumph* was recovered in the early 1990s by Frances Smith Foster, along with two other novels also serialized in the *Christian Recorder*. All three novels are reprinted in Foster's *Minnie's Sacrifice, Sowing and Reaping, Trial and Triumph: Three Rediscovered Novels by Frances E. W. Harper*, cited here as *MS*.

Leroy—which was published in its entirety—*Trial and Triumph*'s serial publication in a small, influential, black Christian newspaper (the *Christian Recorder*, affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church) enabled the novel's didactic function and ensured the relevance of Harper's schoolgirl story for her predominantly black audience. In fact, the novel emerged not only from a long line of public, African-American newspaper debates over black education which began in the 1820s, but more particularly from a specific discussion that Harper conducted with a fellow educator in the pages of yet another black, Christian periodical, the *A. M. E. Church Review* in 1885.⁷ Both the genealogy of the novel and the methodological details of Harper's plan reveal how *Trial and Triumph*'s emphasis on the black community—as a source of readers and character models—anchors it in the panorama of late-nineteenth-century African-American educational movements I will trace below. In turn, as we shall see, those African-American educational movements, which ultimately balance a reliance on formal education with less formal educational methods, reveal the broader trajectory of nineteenth century American female education that I have been tracing throughout this dissertation.

⁷ I wish to thank Dr. Jean Mulhern, chief librarian at Wilberforce University in Ohio, for her help locating Elliott's essay. *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 2, includes a letter from Elliott to Washington, and a footnote explaining that "George M. Elliott, born in Virginia in 1849, was a preacher and principal of Knox Academy, a normal school in Selma, Ala. Later he moved to Beaufort, S.C., where he was pastor of the Berean Presbyterian Church and one of the founders of an industrial school" (275).

Harper's "A Factor in Human Progress" has been reprinted in Foster's *A Brighter Coming Day*. All future references to the essay will direct readers to that version.

In the context of this chapter then, *Iola Leroy* speaks loudest in the places it is silent, in the rifts Harper creates between the African-American social world that novel represents, and the African-American audience it is purportedly intended to serve. For example, Harper could not possibly be said to advocate Iola's peculiar path toward social activism, nor proffer her as a model for young black schoolgirls. After all, Iola is raised as a white girl, and it is at first only her direct experience of slavery that forces her to identify involuntarily with others of her race and devote herself to their uplift. Moreover, she is educated in a predominantly white Northern school according to middle-class values and Cult of True Womanhood standards. "Although this ideology of domesticity was the veritable antithesis of the black woman's reality," Deborah McDowell asserts, Harper "ironically accommodated her 'new' model image of black womanhood to its contours" in this novel (284). Iola's visibly white appearance and her conformity to standards of white womanhood have suggested to critics from McDowell to Hazel Carby, John Ernest, and Carla L. Peterson, that Harper was seeking the support of white audiences for an elite group of blacks more pointedly than she endeavored to model the development of a black character for the black community. Yet, even if we set aside these significant impediments to Iola's role as a model for African-American readers, her story is also too outdated to offer a relevant guide for black female activity at the end of the nineteenth century. Written and published in the post-Reconstruction period, the novel nevertheless describes Iola's upbringing in the radically different Civil War era and ends before the cataclysmic failure of Reconstruction policies in the South. Iola's actions,

admirable as they are, are impractical and inapplicable to the lives of most readers, white or black, in 1892.

Lucille Delaney presents a different kind of problem. Introduced quite suddenly in the last third of the novel as an acquaintance of Harry Leroy, Lucille is a dark-skinned, college-educated black woman whom Iola idolizes almost on sight. With equal speed, the reader recognizes excellence in Lucille's character, for she is self-sacrificing, intelligent, visionary, and utterly devoted to teaching others of her race. As soon as she appears, P. Gabrielle Foreman observes, Lucille takes over as "the most political woman in *Iola Leroy*" and "arguably the proto-feminist heroine of the novel" (343). And yet, Lucille is in many ways a blank page. Harper again offers little clue to her black female readers as to how they might themselves develop Lucille's exemplary character, for we never learn her personal or family history, nor how she overcame the obstacles she surely faced as a black female seeking entry to college. Though Foreman and others have acknowledged that both characters' names reference prominent, contemporary historical models for Harper's black female readers, and thus implicitly update the novel—"Lucille" evokes the former slave and autobiographer Lucy Delaney while "Iola" refers to the radical activist Ida B. Wells—the text itself gives no explicit suggestions for how those readers might specifically emulate the educational pathways that these real women carved out to become race leaders themselves.

In *Trial and Triumph*, however, Harper presents the story of Annette Harcourt, an adolescent schoolgirl who grows up in the context of a minutely-drawn formal and informal education system, and who matures into an adult race leader thanks to that dual

context. Much more than the female protagonists in *Iola Leroy*, Annette would have presented to Harper's intended audience a recognizable, familiar example of post-Reconstruction African-American urban girlhood. Annette is a plain-faced orphan, not an exceptional beauty, who must learn to develop her intellect and talent in an atmosphere where, as we shall see, most of the white population is hostile to blacks, and much of the black population is skeptical and wary of its intellectually ambitious brethren. If Iola is one-dimensional, beautiful and "angelic" (193), resembling "a human being less and less, and a saint more and more" as she "fulfills her role as exemplary black woman" (McDowell 286), Annette is "an anomalous contradiction," not a "pattern saint"; when she "looked in the [mirrored] glass...no stretch of imagination could make her conceive that she was beautiful in either form or feature"; furthermore, her personality is, by turns, "loving," "obliging and companionable," and "unsociable, unamiable, and repelling" (250, 273, 216, 251). By creating in Annette a more ordinary-looking and more "realistic" character (that is, one with a less predictable and less perfect temperament than Iola's), Harper is better able to submit her to the reading public as an attainable model for a teenage girl.

Relatedly, where *Iola Leroy* arguably reserved its broadest appeal for a white, middle-class readership accustomed to those female angels of the hearth that so heavily populate sentimental fiction, *Trial and Triumph* aimed to shore up a newer African-American literary tradition that would speak more convincingly to blacks who did not relate to (and felt excluded from) the white middle-class American model (Peterson "Frances Harper," 43). Indeed, though the novel is clearly influenced by the standards of

white womanhood promulgated by white women's sentimental and domestic fiction, as we will see, Harper adapts these models to demonstrate how they may usefully apply to African-American womanhood, and how they do not.

One of three Harper serials published in the *Christian Recorder* newspaper—a vehicle of the African Methodist Episcopal Church with a nationwide but almost exclusively black readership—*Trial and Triumph* foregrounds the vulnerabilities and strengths of the 1880s African-American community, even as it shields that community from the criticism of a potentially unsympathetic white audience (Toohey 202; Rouse 128; Foster, "Gender" 51; and Peterson, "Frances Harper" 41).⁸ During the post-Reconstruction period especially, as Michelle Campbell Toohey has observed, "[w]hile the white press was trying to erase the horrors of slavery in an attempt at moral catharsis and economic reunification, the black periodical became one of the few vehicles left to continue the discussion of slavery's repercussions" and to imagine ways of overcoming continued economic, intellectual, and racial oppression via education and religion (205; see also McHenry 188). In fact, P. Joy Rouse adds, writers for the black periodical press

⁸ Evidence suggests that *Christian Recorder* readers, as well as its contributing writers, understood that the public conversation held (or "recorded") on its pages was somehow protected by the insularity of the black community, even though the newspaper was publicly available to anyone who might wish to purchase it. One subscriber wrote in January, 1877, "is not only our church paper, but [is] truly the colored people's organ in the United States, and the best family paper (colored) now published....Better than all, it is read and is creating a taste for reading. Fathers and mothers that cannot read, when a day's work is done, press the school children or some friend into service and the *Recorder* is read in the family circle. The sayings of different writers are commented upon, the news is discussed, and pleasant, instructive evenings are spent. It is thus giving food for thought during the day. The question is now quite common when a friend meets another to ask, 'What does the *Recorder* say this week?'" (Qtd. in Foster, "Gender" 53)

often took advantage of the circumscribed nature of the medium: they “wrote to make the issues they identified a matter of public [African-American] discourse...[and] contributed to a public literacy grounded in action and critical consciousness of the political and social dynamics within and involving the black community” (128). I would posit that Harper’s novel represents one significant recording of *her* voice in that discourse, particularly as a direct response to an essay in the *A. M. E. Church Review*, where Alabama preacher and normal school principal George M. Elliott asked in the April 1885 issue “How shall we educate?” (“We Must Educate,” 331).⁹ Elliott’s own answer to that question presented a specific “line of action” Harper felt was “finely mapped”; specifically, she praised his recommendations for cultivating self-respect and self-reliance (that is, the race’s reliance on itself) in her own *A.M.E. Church Review* essay, “A Factor in Human Progress,” in the subsequent issue of that publication (Foster, *Brighter Trial and Triumph* in fact develops according to Elliott’s recommendations, and his stamp is felt upon the novel in Harper’s liberal use of phrases and quotations from his essay, throughout her book.¹⁰ However much critics may debate the audience for whom

⁹ *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 2, includes a letter from Elliott to Washington, and a footnote explaining that “George M. Elliott, born in Virginia in 1849, was a preacher and principal of Knox Academy, a normal school in Selma, Ala. Later he moved to Beaufort, S.C., where he was pastor of the Berean Presbyterian Church and one of the founders of an industrial school” (275).

¹⁰ I will cite here just two examples. Elliott writes: “If there be no avenues before us, we must make one. The ancients were sometimes accustomed to represent perseverance by a man with a pick-axe bearing this motto: ‘Either I will find a way or make one’” (333). In Harper’s novel, by comparison, Mr. Thomas says on several occasions, “If I don’t see an opening I will make one” (186, 244), and Harper even goes so far as to call this “his motto” (244). Similarly, Elliott cites with disdain members of the black community who argue that “it is no use to educate” by claiming “‘There are no positions open for us.’ ...

Harper wrote *Iola Leroy*, it is very clear that *Trial and Triumph* was not “merely carrying [a] white message in a black envelope” (Foster, “Gender” 52).

Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, where *Iola Leroy* presents two African-American adult female race leaders with no observable or replicable training and education, *Trial and Triumph* recommends specific pedagogical strategies that nurture its adolescent protagonist to become a race leader, one who is steady enough on her own feet to endure the trials of growing up black and female in 1880s America and broad-minded enough to advance not only her own interests but those of her downtrodden community. With a sense of purpose and level of detail that Harper avoids in her later novel, in *Trial and Triumph* she asks how the black race can best benefit from a white-dominated public education system that it does not fully trust to shape its young female students into strong adult women. Harper’s answer contributes to an emerging body of progressive educational reforms that attempt to use the public school system for the variety of academic and social opportunities it affords the schoolgirl, but also to decrease the predominantly white institution’s authority over the black schoolgirl’s life. Of particular importance is Harper’s conviction that formal public schooling can provide necessary training and information for black females, but that it should not be counted upon as an unbiased (non-racist) source, nor as the sole educational resource for African-American success at the end of the nineteenth century. Instead, Harper suggests, the girl

‘Education is not necessary.’ [and] ‘I got on in the world without any education, and my children can do the same.’” (337). In *Trial and Triumph*, Annette’s grandmother and her aunt Eliza offer many of these same rebuffs (182, 230); I discuss their discouraging comments at length later in this chapter.

must look to herself and to educated members of the black community in order to develop a curriculum that will supplement her formal school lessons and educate her as a future teacher who can help uplift the race. Although surprisingly little attention has been paid to it, *Trial and Triumph* thus provides a crucial counterpoint to *Iola Leroy*, demonstrating how differently Harper thought to depict black, educated females to an exclusively African-American rather than a mixed-race audience. Annette's adolescent narrative represents an earlier, more deliberate, and more fully articulated phase in the development of Harper's thinking about how black females should be educated, and how female race leaders are created in the face of sometimes fierce opposition from both white and black society.

Competing Views: Black Education in the Black Periodical Press

Before we examine the pedagogical strategies that make *Trial and Triumph* such an essential contribution to the field of African-American and American schoolgirl literature, it is important to acknowledge the novel's literary genealogy in the black periodical press for, though Harper would incorporate into *Trial and Triumph* many of the same themes, tropes, and plot devices from white women's fiction on which she relies in *Iola Leroy*, the predominating features of her earlier novel arise from its publication in an African-American newspaper that had strong ties both to its audience and to more than six decades of increasingly complex newspaper debates among black writers regarding black education.

Indeed, if newspapers were an essential tool in the education of Native Americans, as I argued in my previous chapter, they were also fundamental in spreading the word, throughout the nineteenth century, that education was the key to delivering African-Americans from slavery and from the ignorance and degradation that system imposed upon them. Between 1827 and 1829, for example, *Freedom's Journal*, the first American newspaper written by and for blacks, printed many brief advertisements for schools enrolling black youth and adults, and article-length admonitions that all free blacks should seek out formal education, even though questions about *how* and *where* that education would be put to use—in America, or in Liberia, for example—were still far from being decided.¹¹ From the 1830s through the 1850s, black newspapers like *The Colored American* and Frederick Douglass's *North Star* urged readers to find ways of educating their children, despite the fact that many Southern states imposed compulsory ignorance laws punishing slaves for attempting to achieve literacy or gain other forms of intellectual training (Bond 175-6). At mid-century, furthermore, *The National Era* (1847-1860)—the white abolitionist weekly that first serialized *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—printed articles and letters protesting that only institutions or governments “founded on wrong and injustice” could oppose the establishment of public schools for blacks. Every one of these newspapers folded before the end of the Civil War—some due to financial difficulties, others because editors felt the war had removed their abolitionist *raison d'être*.

¹¹ See, for example, “African Education,” February 15, 1828 and “Education in Philadelphia,” October 10, 1828, *Freedom's Journal*. See also “Make Your Sons Mechanics and Farmers—not Waiters Porters and Barbers,” March 18, 1853, *Frederick Douglass's Paper* (formerly *The North Star*), and “Slavery Against Public Schools,” *The National Era*, June 25, 1857.

d'être—but while they existed, they helped originate among blacks and whites a public, printed conversation about the struggle for black liberty and the intimately related struggle for black access to formal schools.

Despite the loss of these particular newspapers, many other small, black-owned, and in most cases, church-affiliated periodicals continued to thrive during and after the Civil War.¹² Gradually, essays on black education shifted away from the role it would play in ending the national problem of slavery, and toward the newer role that black teachers and students should adopt in lifting the race out of the poverty and inequity that remained after emancipation. Some took a militant tone, admonishing blacks to use education as a kind of weapon, like David facing a powerful Goliath. “We must commence now!” insists one such 1867 article in the *Christian Recorder*:

We as a people should begin now, and teach our oppressors that we are men amongst men. Will the barbarous traitor cease to murder your brethren in the South as long as you are destitute of intellectual power?....Will you ever become MEN—great MEN—in this government if you allow that cruel monster who has been in your midst for past generations—ignorance—always to be your leader to destruction?....We must have improvement—improvement in mind—improvement in knowledge—improvement in every practical thing.¹³

¹² P. Joy Rouse has noted that 1,187 black newspapers were founded between 1865 and 1900, as compared to only 40 before the war—a jump that surely fueled and was fueled by postwar gains in both black literacy and formal education (130).

¹³ Christy, C. F. “We must commence now!” *Christian Recorder*, January 19, 1867.

On the other hand, some writers imagined that if blacks could only endure the isolation of their second-class status a little longer, education would gradually and peacefully smooth the transition from enslavement to full citizenship: “A little more patient waiting, and all will be well,” wrote one Charles Alexander in February, 1866; “Mean time we may best approve our manhood by our deeds. Religion and education are the best agencies for the strengthening of our cause. Let the black man once become a model of moral deportment and enlightened culture, and his legal and political status will be as favorable as he could desire.”¹⁴ Alexander’s sentiment typifies that of many black writers who advised other blacks to accept their segregated position, using it as an opportunity to withdraw from competition with whites, mobilize as a group, and prepare intellectually for the coming day that would both allow and require them to contribute to a racially integrated and equal society.

After the closing of the Freedman’s Bureau in 1872 and the consequent withdrawal of federal funds for black schools, the newspapers’ focus on black education increasingly reflected a burgeoning philosophy of racial self-help, which argued that blacks should rely solely on their own community to do for themselves what whites either would not or could not do for them.¹⁵ Papers such as the *Christian Recorder*, the A.

¹⁴ See Alexander’s “A Letter from Logansport, Ind.” *Christian Recorder*, Febrary 10, 1866.

¹⁵ Throughout this chapter, I refer to “the” African-American community as a shorthand for the large group of blacks who comprised the intended audience of these local and national periodical publications. In fact, there were many different African-American communities bearing significant cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences (just to name a few). Later in this chapter, I discuss one such community—the Gullah culture of South Carolina, Georgia and northern Florida.

M. E. Church Review, The Free Speech and Headlight, and The Christian Banner

aggressively “positioned the black community in opposition to a government that was failing them,” and portrayed self-education—the schooling of black students by black teachers—as the cornerstone of racial self-help (Rouse 136, 139).¹⁶

Of course, within the self-help and self-education movements, diverse opinions developed regarding the academic fields and methods of study that would be of greatest use to the race, and, after the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the black periodical press began to enjoy a peak period as a forum for the African-American community to discuss and weigh each of these new educational options (Rouse 131). A proliferation of newspaper articles, sketches, letters, and serial literature aimed to help the black community sort through an unprecedented array of educational agendas, pedagogies, and schooling opportunities being offered by state-supported black schools in the south and newly desegregated schools in the north. In debates we now associate almost exclusively with Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois—indeed, one might argue that the entire array of debates over black education has been obscured by the history of their rivalry—some writers argued in favor of industrial or vocational training, while others advocated classical academic education. Yet, many essayists also debated the responsibilities of black churches to establish universities that would combine religious and secular education for older students, while others urged black philanthropists to fund black schools privately in order to give black children alternatives to attending integrated

¹⁶ *The Free Speech and Headlight* was edited by part-owner Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and the *Christian Banner* was edited by Nannie Helen Burroughs.

(but commonly racist) institutions (Bond 129).¹⁷ Many articles, too, were devoted to the education of black youth and to delineating distinct curricula for black girls and black boys.¹⁸

Despite their differences, by the 1880s many writers for these publications shared a common vision that black schools would educate black students, and then the students who emerged from these schools would go on to influence and teach yet more black students, thus perpetuating a cycle of uplift that would begin and remain inside the African-American community. Even writers who argued that it was preferable to send black children to mixed-race schools rather than all-black ones (because mixed-race schools were better funded, for example, or because they would perhaps accustom black and white children to life in an integrated society) ultimately maintained that at the end of the school day, black children would return home to black neighborhoods with critical knowledge which they would then impart to an undereducated, adult black populace. Black students were thus portrayed as pivotal to racial uplift, receiving knowledge from black or white teachers and then distributing that knowledge back out to the black community, whether as formally trained school teachers or as role models providing inspiration and informal instruction to other blacks.

¹⁷ See, for example, “Responsibility of the Church For the Character of the Scientific Education of Our Youth,” *Christian Recorder*, April 27, 1867.

¹⁸ See especially Gertrude Mossell’s regular column, “The Women’s Department,” in the *New York Freeman*, 1885-86; Reverend D. I. Satterfield’s essay “The Education of Afro-American Girls” in *The American Missionary*, July 1892; Miss Parmenter’s “A Plea for Colored Girls,” in *The American Missionary* 1895. See also John H. Adams’ “Rough Sketches: A Study of the Features of the New Negro Woman” and “The New Negro Man” in *Voice of the Negro*, August and October 1904, respectively.

This issue of whether black youth education should center around the creation of professional school teachers or informal role models is at the heart of a public conversation between Harper and George M. Elliott in the 1885 *A. M. E. Church Review*. Here, Elliott advocates that individual blacks should educate themselves as role models for others (a model that avoids active nurturing), while Harper contends that individual blacks must be trained to educate others more directly, as teachers (a model she perceived as essentially feminine). Though Elliott and Harper differ on this key point, it should be noted that they share a hearty suspicion of the educational institutions blacks were increasingly occupying with whites at this time, and therefore a deep ambivalence toward formal education. Both of their essays argue that formal education is essential to African-American progress; however they also suggest that other, informal means of instruction are necessary to supplement the inferior academic training that young blacks could secure at either white (often racist) schools or underfunded black ones.

In “We Must Educate,” Elliott prescribes a three-tiered approach to African-American formal schooling in the post-Reconstruction era. He asks the question which gives this chapter its title, “How shall we ever get out of slavery?”, because he sees the black community still suffering from slavery’s repercussions, and especially from their lack of formal education. Elliott declares that, in order to slough off the legacy of slavery, blacks must prioritize formal schooling above all other endeavors. He suggests that the African-American community should (1) “practice rigid economy,” foreswearing luxury items and forgoing immediate material gratification in exchange for gradual intellectual uplift (331). Economizing financial resources so that blacks can go to school, Elliott

argues, will help the race to (2) “cultivate self-reliance”; by “looking more to ourselves for help, and relying less upon others to do everything for us,” the race will learn to depend on itself, not only for goods and services, but ultimately for less tangible prizes like confidence and self-esteem (332). Self-reliance, finally, will lead to (3) racial and individual “self-respect,” the sense that whatever the race does achieve it achieves on its own merits, and whatever the African-American individual has accomplished, he or she has accomplished within the context of a supportive black community (334-5). Indeed, Elliott argues, blacks need temporarily to embrace their segregation from the racially-mixed American culture, withdrawing from interaction and competition with whites at least until such time as they can claim to be as well-educated and self-sufficient as that dominant race: “[W]ith a wise head and a diligent hand,” he writes, “we may take advantage of this training [in adversity] and turn it as a means to an end in our education and elevation” (331).¹⁹

When Elliott’s essay caught Harper’s attention she was already a frequent and popular contributor to the black periodical press, having previously serialized two other

¹⁹ One noteworthy, humorous and biting reference to this line of reasoning (that adversity—even slavery—has value as a training ground, appeared in the *Christian Recorder* as early as 1866: The “Letter of a Self-Made Colored Man,” reads in part: “Now whatever may be said of the literary and intellectual abilities of your worthy correspondents, in which their interesting communications prove them to be all that is desirable, and which to my mind will stand the test of jealous critics, I beg leave to say that my *alma mater* was the University of negro slavery, in which from freshman to senior student, I graduated N. B. N. [,] Nothing but negro” (June 2, 1866). The essay goes on to name other “degrees” earned by this former slave, including “F.R.C. First Rate Cobbler,” “F.R.B. First-rate Blacksmith,” and “C.D.L. Common Dock Laborer.” It is attributed to “one of the most influential colored men of this country,” who signs himself “Simon Peter Barjona.”

novels in the *Christian Recorder* (*Minnie's Sacrifice* in 1869 and *Sowing and Reaping* in 1876-77²⁰), and having published a number of essays on education, several of which I have mentioned above. With the publication of "A Factor in Human Progress," though, Harper indulges a desire to make the black periodical press into an even more engaging forum for debate, and she initiates a public discussion of self-help and education by responding directly to Elliott's earlier essay. Harper demonstrates her sympathy with Elliott in her essay's opening lines: "In the last number of the A. M. E. Review was a thoughtful paper entitled 'We must educate.' The first question asked was: How shall we educate? And a line of action was finely mapped" (275); Harper goes on to approve, specifically, of the importance Elliott places on self-reliance and self-respect, as well as his insistence that black education be "thorough," "practical," and "Christian" (275; Elliott 341-44).

However, Harper finds that the most important, but underdeveloped, facet of Elliott's plan is the perpetuation of racial self-help through individual "self-surrender" (278): "the question worth asking," she claims, "is not simply, What will education do for us [as individuals]? but, What will it help us do for others?" (276). Harper perceives Elliott to be saying that individual blacks should prioritize education, and that they will encourage other blacks to attend school simply by setting their own example; consequently, the self-respect that each individual builds up for him- or herself will

²⁰ Neither novel deals with the issue of black education as such, though *Minnie's Sacrifice* does involve the formal education in the North of a Southern-born boy and girl who, like Iola Leroy and her brother Harry, do not know they are black until they are near adulthood.

gradually permeate the entire race and “lift them up.” But the shortcoming of Elliott’s plan, in Harper’s view, is that it is overly reliant on the indirect and slow-acting influence of one person on another. By contrast, Harper argues that in order for the race to rise *as a race* (rather than as a group of disconnected individuals), some blacks must be willing to make personal sacrifices that will bear directly upon the improvement of others: there must be black students who are willing to devote their lives to the pursuit of learning and teaching, even at the expense of pursuing other personal or educational goals that might bring them more individual glory, money, or fame:

Do you point me with pride to your son, and tell me that the best college in the country is his *alma mater*; that he has passed triumphantly through its curriculum; that he is well-versed in ancient lore and modern learning, and that his mind is an arsenal of well-stored facts, fully equipping him for the battle of life? I ask, in reply, Is he noble and upright? Does he prefer integrity to gold, principle to ease, true manhood to self-indulgence?....If not, I answer, his education is unfinished. He may be brilliant and witty; eager, keen and alert for the main chance; but he is not prepared to be a moral athlete, armed for glorious strife, ready to win on hotly contested fields new battles for humanity (276).

This “self-surrender”—the act of subordinating one’s own needs to the greater good—is, finally, the factor to which Harper’s essay title refers, the single most important factor in human progress.

Self-surrender is also at the heart of *Trial and Triumph*, which Harper pens shortly after her exchange with Elliott. The novel is devoted to Harper’s concern with

teacher training and novelizes a detailed pedagogical system by which, Harper argues, African-American *girls* can be trained as future teachers who will, more selflessly than boys, devote and “surrender” themselves to the cause of racial uplift. As we shall see, *Trial and Triumph* expands upon Harper’s earlier response to Elliott’s essay, turning what seemed to be a subtle disagreement with Elliott into a full-blown treatise on the education of black girls in the post-Reconstruction era, and into an argument for nothing less than the reconfiguration of a self-segregated black community around educated, self-surrendering female race leaders.

Complementary Pedagogies in *Trial and Triumph*

The novel revolves around young Annette Harcourt, who attends an integrated school by day and is mentored by two former black schoolteachers during extracurricular hours. Her informal education, it turns out, is as important as formal schooling in helping Annette to develop her intellect and talents in a social atmosphere where most of the white population is hostile to blacks, and much of the black population is wary of predominantly white institutions. As Harper’s characters wonder how the black race can best benefit from a white-dominated public education system that it does not fully trust, their dialogue is peppered with phrases and quotations from Elliott’s essay, demonstrating both his direct influence upon the novel and the deep resonance of their conversation upon Harper’s own developing ideas about black education. Casting a wider net, the novel showcases a variety of popular educational philosophies, endorsing a combination of classical and vocational training for boys and girls, and anticipating such

concepts as “the [race’s] upper tens” and “the new Negro” that would not gain currency until more than a decade later, via the works of W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and others.²¹ As a serial publication, too, *Trial and Triumph* promoted group discussion as a means of uniting and educating blacks, while the *Recorder*’s limited distribution shielded from the criticism of a potentially unsympathetic white audience the vulnerabilities and strengths of the black urban community Harper represents.²² But most importantly, the novel’s primary focus on the education of a female student drove home Harper’s belief that, while both black men and women should strive to be agents of change—“sculptors of life” she writes in “Factor”—it is young black females who are best-equipped to voluntarily delay personal gratification for the sake of studying hard to become teachers and leaders of racial uplift. Ultimately, Harper suggests that the black community should be reconfigured around the educated black female, whose “devising brain and feeling

²¹ I refer, of course, to W. E. B. Du Bois’s concept of “the talented tenth,” made famous in his 1903 essay of the same name and published in his *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day*. For an excellent discussion of the women who “lived and worked DuBois’s theories in both political activism and education,” but have been largely “absent from history,” and especially the history of DuBois’s own development and impact, see Waite’s 2001 essay, “DuBois and the Invisible Talented Tenth.”

According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in “Harlem on our Minds” (1997), Alain Locke’s essay “The New Negro,” first published in 1925, “enshrined” the concept and movement of the “New Negro”; however, Gates notes that this movement took “at least three forms” prior to the publication of Locke’s essay: Dvorák’s declaration that black spirituals were America’s “first authentic contribution to world culture,” Picasso’s references to African sculpture in the “signature” modernist painting *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, and the work of Du Bois himself, all highlight the “potential for political uses of black art and literature in America” as a means for African-Americans to “save themselves” (3).

²² Toohey 202; Rouse 128; Foster, “Gender” 51; and Peterson “Frances Harper” 41.

heart” contain both the emotional and intellectual capacity to unify and mobilize others of her race (“Factor” 275-276).

Baldly emphasizing the relevance and timeliness of the story for readers of the *Christian Recorder*, Harper renders the black urban post-Reconstruction community in minute detail in *Trial and Triumph*, embedding historical and geographical markers in the surface of her narrative.²³ For instance, the novel is set in the fictional city of A.P.—probably Philadelphia, where Harper lived, on and off, since 1854, and where the African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded, and the *Review* printed.²⁴ Harper’s omniscient

²³ P. Gabrielle Foreman dubs this strategy “histotextuality,” which she investigates in *Iola Leroy*. See “‘Reading Aright’: White Slavery, Black Referents, and the Strategy of Histotextuality in *Iola Leroy*.”

²⁴ I wish to thank Dr. Charles Blockson, founder of the Blockson Library at Temple University, Mr. Lee Stanley of the Philadelphia Archives in Philadelphia’s City Hall, and especially, Dr. Richard Tyler (also of the Philadelphia Archives), who helped to confirm that Harper’s A.P. is based on the 7th ward in Philadelphia. According to Tyler, an 1866 map of the city shows a small alleyway type of street called “A. P. Place” in the 7th ward—an area that Du Bois would make famous with his ethnographic study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, in 1899. This street is located 8 blocks east and 6 blocks south of where Harper herself lived in Philadelphia (on 1006 Bainbridge street), making it extremely likely that she would have known A.P. Place, and indeed the whole ward, quite well. Though I have so far been unable to determine the significance of the initials “A.P.,” it makes sense that the neighborhood setting of the novel is based on the 7th ward, which Du Bois reports was home to a diverse socio-economic group of African-Americans and whites, not only at the time of his writing but for decades earlier, as well. It is described by Herbert Aptheker in his 1973 introduction to Du Bois’s study, as both “a center of Black population,” ‘a ghetto,’ “and also—somewhat ironically—[a center] of the very rich” (10-11). Du Bois writes: “It is a thickly populated district of varying character,” and “every class is represented,” including “noted criminals, male and female,...gamblers and prostitutes....many poverty-stricken people, decent but not energetic....stevedores, porters, laborers and laundresses,” “shrewd and sleek politicians,” and “many respectable colored families....wealthy in a small way” (58-62). Moreover, in Samuel McCune Lindsay’s 1899 introduction to the original text, he notes that the 7th ward is “peculiar in its excess of females and of young persons, men and women, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five....Why the abnormal excess of females in

narrator follows two characters, with alternating chapters on Annette Harcourt and on her former schoolteacher, Mr. Thomas, a black man who, ironically, loses his job to a white teacher once the schools in their city are desegregated (in Philadelphia, this occurred in 1881): “Public opinion which moves slowly, had advanced far enough to admit the colored children into the different schools, irrespective of color, but it was not prepared, except in a few places to admit the colored teachers as instructors” (186).²⁵ Annette’s intellectual and social development is recounted in tandem with Mr. Thomas’s search for new employment; they share a social setting that allows African-Americans to be formally educated and leaves room for black neighborhoods to emerge and even thrive, although the larger urban environment places sharp boundaries on those neighborhoods, and is most uncongenial to blacks outside those boundaries.²⁶ Classrooms are integrated this city Negro population? The limited occupations open to men have much to do with it” (xii; see also 55-56).

²⁵ The first public school system in Pennsylvania was established in 1834. It was, however, “public” in name only: schools were segregated by race and supported by tax monies kept in separate funds, one for black taxpayers and one for white taxpayers. The white taxpayers’ fund was larger and white schools far superior to those for colored children. In 1854, a law was passed in Pennsylvania to combine the state’s tax monies and fund all public schools equally. However, a loophole in the 1854 law also allowed individual districts to exclude African-American students from public schools if the district housed a private, all-black facility that was open for at least four months of the year, and if there were 20 or more black students to attend that school within the district. If these few conditions were unmet, black students were supposed, by law, to be able to attend publicly funded schools, yet evidence suggests that few actually did. In 1881, however, the 1854 law was repealed and schools desegregated, making it illegal for any separate schools to be maintained in the state (Woodson 309, Bond 377). The 1881 desegregation in Philadelphia is likely the real impetus for Harper’s Mr. Thomas losing his job.

²⁶ Several critics examining *Trial and Triumph* focus on the labors of Mr. Thomas. Born into slavery, Mr. Thomas enrolls himself in a Southern manual labor school after emancipation. He learns carpentry, but becomes a teacher in the North, since that

but poisoned with racial prejudice; workplaces are heavily circumscribed and segregated, and the general atmosphere is so rich with discontent and despair that “the fires of anarchy” lurk at the edges of civil conversation between black men, and free young black girls like Annette begin at school “to feel the social contempt which society has heaped upon the colored people” (226). Before Annette and Mr. Thomas can triumph by finding meaningful work—and in Annette’s case, love and marriage, as well—they must endure significant trials brought on by the historical, social, and political challenges of their place and time.²⁷

Despite its parallel plot lines, which follow Annette’s and Mr. Thomas’s struggles over a period of approximately eighteen years, the novel begins and ends with Annette (from age 13-31), thereby accentuating her prominence for the author and reader. The orphaned and abandoned illegitimate daughter of a giddy schoolteacher (now dead) and her scoundrel, bar-owner boyfriend, Annette lives with her maternal grandmother in an atmosphere of “moral contagion” (197). In fact, the frequently overbearing presence of Annette’s neighbors and family members complicates the value that community will hold

profession can offer more to the uplift of the race than can his skills in construction. Nevertheless, once Mr. Thomas is fired from school teaching, he must again seek employment as a manual laborer. Despite his expertise he is repeatedly rebuffed by white employers, and his verbal responses to the racism he encounters in the North constitute some of the novel’s most compelling diatribes on the subject of skilled black labor in the post-Reconstruction era. See especially Peterson’s “‘Further Liftings of the Veil’” and Jennifer Campbell’s “‘The Great Something Else’: Women’s Search for Meaningful Work in Sarah Orne Jewett’s *A Country Doctor* and France E. W. Harper’s *Trial and Triumph*.²⁸”

²⁷ There is also a male adolescent student in the novel, Charley Cooper, and he is also mentored by Mr. Thomas. However, Charley is a secondary character, and Harper does not accord him, or his education, the same attention that she gives Annette.

for Annette; like the suspicious institutions of the public school system and the urban workplace, the neighborhood in which Annette lives is frequently a scene of negative influence. The very name of their street, Tennis Court, makes punning reference to the competitive, back-and-forth bickering exhibited by many of the block's residents, which undermines the potential for communal feeling in the neighborhood: "a fearful amount of gossiping, news-carrying and tattling went on, which often resulted in quarrels and contentions, which, while it never resulted in blood, sadly lowered the tone of social life. It was the arena of wordy strife in which angry tongues were the only weapons of warfare, and poor little Annette was fast learning their modes of battle" (196).²⁸ In addition to these daily perils, Annette must contend with her neighbors' intemperance and disdain (183, 196); her grandmother's ambivalent attitude toward both her and her intellectual improvement (181-2, 228-9); and her own notoriously quick, surly temper (179).²⁹ Harper introduces and explains Annette's complex character, thus:

She was the deserted child of a selfish and unprincipled man and a young mother whose giddiness and lack of self-control had caused her to trail the robes of her womanhood in the dust. With such an ante-natal history how much she needed judicious, but tender, loving guidance. In that restless, sensitive and impulsive child was the germ of a useful woman with a warm, loving heart, ready to respond to human suffering, capable of being faithful in friendship and devoted in love.

Before that young life with its sad inheritance seemed to lay a future of trial, and

²⁸ No "Tennis Court" exists on any of the city maps I have consulted.

²⁹ See also pps. 183, 215-217, 226, 270 for more references to Annette's temper.

how much, humanly speaking, seemed to depend on the right training of that life and the development within her of self-control, self-reliance, and self-respect (184-5).

From these inauspicious beginnings, Annette must somehow overcome her personal and cultural limitations and emerge as a role model for Harper's similarly situated black female readers.

Fortunately, Annette harbors "a love for literature and poetry," and is believed by some to have literary "talent or even poetic genius" (185). She is smart, passionate, and interested in learning, and her love for books can be counted on to "keep that child out of mischief" (181). In addition to conducting her own extracurricular program of reading, Annette is counseled by her neighbor, Mr. Thomas, and another former schoolteacher, Mrs. Lasette.³⁰ These exemplary adults stand in stark contrast to the largely unfriendly

³⁰ The basis for the character of Anna Lasette also appears in Harper's "A Factor in Human Progress," again demonstrating that essay's importance to the genesis of this novel. Harper writes there: "I remember once talking with a school teacher in a Southern State, who, speaking of her lack of society, said of those by whom she was surrounded: 'They all talk gossip, and wouldn't improve me.' Suppose she had viewed the social condition of her neighbors from another standpoint, and said, These women cannot improve me, but I will try to improve them. If they talk nothing but gossip, I will try to raise the tone of conversation, and show them a more excellent way. I will study to teach these mothers how to take care of their little ones....because I have had advantages that were denied them; as a friend and sister I will share with them my richer heritage" (Foster, *Brighter* 280).

It is of some significance that Mrs. Lasette once lived in the same neighborhood as Annette, but, due to a smart property investment made by her husband years ago, lives in a different ward during the time of the novel's action. Mrs. Lasette mentions the move in Chapter 6, when she is explaining why she believes the desegregation of schools is so important to the life of the nation. She claims that the public school serving *her* neighborhood, Ward 19 (which is east of Ward 7, and home to a far greater number of whites), is a sound facility with excellent teachers; on the other hand, the black-only school, not supported by public monies, was "ungraded," "poorly ventilated and

environment where Annette lives; they continually reinforce Annette's studies, augmenting her reading list from time to time, emphasizing Christian duty and supplementing the academic lessons she learns at school with personal attention and advice. Periodically, too, both Mrs. Lasette and Mr. Thomas converse with Grandmother Harcourt, endeavoring to tip the scales of her ambivalence so that she, too, eventually comes to support the cultivation of Annette's unique gifts. Once Annette is duly encouraged by these key figures to pursue her informal and formal education, she becomes a devoted scholar, as eager to help others as she is to help herself.

True to the novel's title, Annette faces many trials which also motivate her plot line and present the series of "cliffhangers" that define the serial format. For example, she is "orphaned" for the second time in her young life by the death of her grandmother in the middle of the novel (254); she is scorned by jealous peers who envy her intellect but are repulsed by her being "very odd and queer, and often go[ing] out into the street as if she never saw a looking glass" (230); she is heartbroken when the flawed past of her lover, Clarence Luzerne, becomes an obstacle to their marriage (and supplies one of the most forced and melodramatic plot-twists in American literature³¹). Converting the force

"unevenly heated" (55) Once the schools were desegregated, though, her own daughter was able to attend the publicly funded school and get a good education in a racially-mixed environment.

³¹ Clarence's "flaw" stems from his having once been married, in his home of New Orleans, to a woman of questionable reputation, and to his desertion of that woman many years before he meets Annette. When Clarence and Annette become engaged, Clarence reveals his prior marriage, explaining that he and his first wife, Marie, had separated due to irreconcilable differences in their characters. After the separation, when a drowned woman is found wearing his wife's clothing—but otherwise unrecognizable, due to her

of these many heartaches into energy for helping others, Annette moves South to teach the freedmen and is eventually joined by a repaired and repentant Clarence, “come not to separate her from her cherished life work, but to help her in uplifting and helping those among whom her lot was cast” (285). Annette’s self-reliance, as well as her love of learning, respect for teaching, and desire to help uplift the race—all traits learned as a schoolgirl—give her the strength, courage, and internal resources to emerge triumphant after her many trials, and finally to have the work, love, and leadership status for which she has been so singularly educated.

As she would do again later, in *Iola Leroy*, in *Trial and Triumph* Harper showcases a variety of scenes of black teaching and learning, in both formal and informal settings. For example, Mr. Thomas counsels his former student, Charley Cooper, that although Charley is light-skinned enough to pass for white and thus find work, doing so would be dishonest and ultimately detrimental to the race’s progress (213-15). Mrs. Lasette similarly imparts character lessons to her daughter when she tells the story of Lucy, Annette’s fallen mother, and thus encourages her to practice “self-control” so she can avoid being seduced by irresponsible men (259). Too, a number of brief references to

gruesome death—Clarence believes his estranged wife to be dead and himself to be free of obligation to the marriage. The moment Clarence discloses this story to Annette, however, while they sit in a park in the city of A.P., his “dead” wife suddenly and unbelievably appears before them. The series of misunderstandings that led to Clarence and Marie’s separation are eventually revealed. At Annette’s prompting, Clarence remains married to Marie until she dies a natural death; then Clarence sets out to find Annette and rekindle their relationship. Despite the dramatics of the story, it is worth noting that Clarence’s full name means, roughly, “clear light,” suggesting to the careful reader (if not to Annette) that his good reputation will indeed be reestablished in the end.

the academic and vocational school experiences of other A.P. residents helps to flesh out the picture of how African-Americans were educated, at home and at school, at the end of the nineteenth century (203, 233).

However, Harper's most extended focus on the educational training of black youth in this novel comes with the weaving in of two complementary teaching strategies which contribute directly to the development of Annette's exemplary character and leadership role, and create the core of Harper's model educational program for African-American girls at home and at school. Both of these recommendations emphasize the importance of male and female adult black mentors providing constant guidance over and support for the study habits of the female student and future teacher. Each strategy, furthermore, is both gendered and racialized: Mrs. Lasette, as we shall see below, relies on a style of teaching and learning that is conversational and therefore "collaborative" (like Genevieve Weir's efforts with Wynema) and which functions, according to Evelyn Ashton-Jones, "in contradistinction to [the] 'patriarchal' values [of] competition, specialization, hierarchy, and more traditional, presentational pedagogies" (8).³² By employing private conversation within the confines of a domestic space, Mrs. Lasette constructs a model of teaching aimed at cooperative problem solving and grassroots uplift. Crucially, she engages in what Gillian Brown calls "politicized domesticity," and Claudia Tate terms "politicized motherhood," bringing together the tenets of the Cult of True (white) Womanhood with, in this case, the social reform needs of her black

³² See Evelyn Ashton-Jones's 1995 essay "Collaboration, Conversation, and the Politics of Gender," and Frances Maher's 2001 essay "John Dewey, Progressive Education, and Feminist Pedagogies: Issues in Gender and Authority."

audience (17). Mrs. Lasette's commitment to unifying the intimate, personal details of her life as a mother with the more public and overtly political needs of her community and her race (for she combines these the "moment" she becomes a mother) models for Annette and for Harper's readers, "the inseparable progress of the self and race," wherein heroines' lives as "wives, mothers, and teachers" are correlated to "their performance and training of African-American citizens, to the acquisition of their collective civil rights, and to the general advancement" of African-Americans (13-14). Though Mrs. Lasette's method is more casual than classroom teaching it is nevertheless quite structured, and though Annette is clearly a participant in her own learning, it remains clear throughout the conversation that Mrs. Lasette is in charge. As they talk, Mrs. Lasette carefully monitors Annette's use of "proper" language, and steers the conversation toward topics she herself determines important. However, her method is still very different from the public classroom forum where students vie for a teacher's attention, contend for the best grade, display their knowledge before a group of their peers, and perform debates over concepts and intellectual problems.³³ Importantly, too, the conversations that Mrs. Lasette

³³ Isaac Watts's 1813 *Improvement of the Mind*, an enormously popular teaching guide throughout the nineteenth century, differentiates between the Socratic method and the "Academic method" frequently practiced in formal classrooms (112-121). The Academic method involves students adopting a position or hypothesis that they are given by their teacher, and either refuting or defending that position by recalling evidence and testimony they have learned. A key difference, then, is that where the Socratic method involves uncovering the students' own viewpoints and latent knowledge, Academic conversations ask participants to adopt personae not integral to their experience or personality. The emphasis in Academic conversations is on testing skill in debate, argument, and rote learning. Socratic style conversation, on the other hand, emphasizes mutual effort to achieve consensus. For an excellent discussion of the influence of Watts' text on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century formal schools, see Joseph Kett's *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties* (15 and 42, especially).

initiates with Annette pointedly fuse assertions of racial equality with proclamations of Christian faith, a combination that is repeated over and again in the pages of the *Christian Recorder*. By using her conversational teaching method to impart lessons about having faith in God and faith in black equality, Mrs. Lasette models a mentoring role that other black women can take on while remaining true to the core “feminine” value of piety.

By contrast, Mr. Thomas’s method offers a model of teaching that male readers might more comfortably adopt as they, too, set out to counsel and mentor young students. Where Mrs. Lasette relies on intimate, private conversations between herself and Annette, Mr. Thomas encourages Annette to fulfill her dream of being an artist by creating a writerly persona, cultivating professional work habits, and indulging in self-promotion and public readings. Though Mr. Thomas’s methods themselves are not racialized, his descriptions of them are; he compares the plight of the post-Reconstruction black searching for work in a white-controlled business arena to the plight of the runaway slave who must knock down the barriers that bar his way to freedom in white-controlled America (186). Both types—the black worker and the runaway slave—must carve their own paths, Mr. Thomas avers, making openings where there were none to be found.

Seeking to mold Annette into a self-reliant and self-sacrificing adult, Harper ultimately has her characters employ both of these teaching methods to lead Annette to the all-important discovery that, in her academic, intellectual, and creative performances she risks “winning, or losing, not only for herself but for others”; she labors “day and night to be a living argument of the capabilities in her race” (227). Her talents reach an

increasingly larger audience as Annette moves from writing poetry, to making a politically-charged commencement speech before a community audience, and finally to teaching and mentoring large numbers of youth and adults in the South. As Ashton-Jones suggests, above, Mrs. Lasette's method of teaching functions to support matriarchal or feminine values while Mr. Thomas's method serves patriarchal or masculine ones. However, Harper clearly sees these two teaching styles as complementary, not mutually exclusive. She does not restrict black females to learning (or teaching) in only the collaborative, "feminized" mode—for Mrs. Lasette also encourages Annette's writing (185, 231)—nor does she insist that self-promotion or competition is just for boys. Rather, she seems to see these teaching modes in combination as essential to Annette's success, and thus argues that both male and female adults must be involved in the education of black youth. In other words, Harper integrates these two styles in Annette's learning experience. She gives the girl two mentors who work with her simultaneously. Ultimately, her education demonstrates that black girls, roundly encouraged by black adults and teachers, can transform themselves and teach others of their race to lift themselves out of slavery.

Annette's tutelage under Mrs. Lasette is referenced throughout the novel but foregrounded in a single chapter near the center of the text (chapter 8 of 20). Their conversation is about a racially-charged conflict that occurs between Annette and a young Irish girl—a classmate of Annette's at her racially mixed school—and which consists primarily of their calling each other names. Though both girls are equally guilty of prejudicial sentiment, the argument takes place within a racist context that supports the

Irish girl's biases against Annette: after all, their teacher regularly punishes misbehaving students by seating them beside black students (216); higher up the administrative chain of command, too, the white school superintendent goes out of his way to expose the "true" race of a light-skinned black man, with the conscious intention of getting him fired from his job (210). While conversing about both the argument and the larger social context in which it occurs, Mrs. Lasette guides Annette through a dialogue that will reveal to the girl the extent to which she has internalized the racist attitudes of her school teacher, as well as the flawed beliefs about blacks in the larger culture. Mrs. Lasette thus provides Annette with both a method of learning (achieved by asking and answering questions) and a method of personal and racial empowerment (achieved by expressing her mind, and thereby proving herself and her race equal to whites in ability to reason, think, and participate in society in a meaningful and valuable way).

The conversation between Annette and Mrs. Lasette occurs one day when fourteen-year-old Annette enters Mrs. Lasette's home, exclaiming "'I never want to go to that school again,'" and "throwing down her books on the table and looking as if she were ready to burst into tears"(215). Mrs. Lasette learns from Annette of the argument she had with Mary Joseph—an argument which stems from Mary Joseph's evident disgust at being seated next to a black girl—in which they call one another "nigger" and "mick." The older woman is eager to use this opportunity to teach Annette that such discouraging words should not cause her to stop learning, to give up on her education. Mrs. Lasette begins, and Annette replies, on alternating lines, below:

“Do you think because Miss Joseph is white that she is any better than you are[?]”

“No, of course not.”

“But don’t you think that she can see and hear a little better than you can?”

“Why, no; what makes you ask such a funny question?”

“Never mind, just answer me a few more questions. Don’t you think if you and she had got to fighting that she would have whipped you because she is white?”

“Why of course not. Didn’t she try to get the ruler out of my hand and didn’t because I was stronger[?]”

“But don’t you think she is smarter than you and gets her lessons better?”

“Now you are shouting.” (218)

Mrs. Lasette’s method of mentoring is aimed at getting Annette to compare her own beliefs (about herself and about blacks in general) to those beliefs she perceives in the people around her, white and black. Beginning with the assumption that whites are inherently better than blacks (“Do you think because Miss Joseph is white that she is any better than you are?”), and moving to the related ideas that whites are more physically perfect (“that she can see and hear a little better than you can?”) and intellectually superior to blacks (“is smarter and gets her lessons better?”), Mrs. Lasette draws attention to the ways in which notions of black inferiority “evolved and [were] thrown out among the masses,” by whites and blacks, to become “interwoven with their mental and moral

life” (“Our Greatest Want” in Foster, *Brighter* 102). Her leading questions challenge Annette’s most basic learned assumptions about essential racial differences, and encourage her to interrogate and scrutinize the status quo.

Yet, similar to Genevieve Weir’s teaching method, Mrs. Lasette does not merely tell Annette that her assumptions are wrong. Rather, her questions are rhetorical; Mrs. Lasette knows that Annette does not think Miss Joseph is better or smarter than she, but she wants to make Annette more aware that, deep down, she knows it, too (218). By asking questions and having Annette articulate the falseness of these beliefs, she recruits Annette to participate in her own learning, instilling in her (and, by extension, the novel’s readers) an appreciation of the ways that exercising one’s voice and expressing one’s opinion are crucial to dispelling ignorance and dismantling a false and destructive view of blacks, both in the girl’s own mind and in her larger social context. Kenneth Seeskin explains that the Socratic method was intended not merely to impart conclusions but to impart a means for *arriving at* conclusions through conversation. The method is called “*elenchus*, which means to examine, refute, or put to shame:

[*Elenchus*] lends itself to dialogue because it requires that at least two voices be heard. It requires, in addition, that the people whose voices we hear be intimately connected with the positions they take. The first rule of *elenchus* is that the respondent must say what he really thinks....The result is that the respondent has more at stake than the outcome of a philosophical argument....At stake are also the moral intuitions which underlie everything one stands for (11).

As practiced by Mrs. Lasette, this question-and-answer method helps to reshape the girl's perception of herself as a participant in a vital, ongoing, and increasingly public conversation that can impact and change long-held stereotypes about blacks and influence the social and political future of her people. By saying what she really thinks (i.e. that whites are not inherently better, stronger, or smarter than blacks), Annette reveals a discrepancy between her actions (specifically, her fight with Miss Joseph, which gives credence to Miss Joseph's notion that whites are better than blacks) and her beliefs; she reveals that she has internalized her culture's racism to some degree, even though Annette also feels, in a deeper way, that her culture's view is false. Indeed, this conversation directs readers toward the kind of group effort that is required to repair the psychic damage caused by centuries of enforced subordination to whites. That is, the conversations between Annette and Mrs. Lasette are meant not only to provoke readers into thinking about race, but also to mirror public conversations encouraged by the serial format of the *Christian Recorder*, whose African-American readers reportedly used the time between weekly installments to contemplate and question, as a group, the issues and topics discussed on its pages (Peterson, "Frances Harper 44; Foster, "Gender" 53).

In addition to teaching self-respect, Mrs. Lasette urges Annette toward conversation and collaboration, thereby emphasizing different but complementary leadership values of cooperation and verbal exchange. In all of Mrs. Lasette's appearances in the novel and interactions with other characters, in fact, she evinces her proficiency and interest in coordinating the needs and voices of large numbers of individuals so that they can better function as a cohesive unit, such as in a classroom, or

family, or community. These proficiencies and interests, gained during her former professional experience as a schoolteacher and her current experiences as wife and mother, comprise Mrs. Lasette's highly gendered teaching style, and they are magnified in her decision to cease teaching school after she marries and becomes a mother: "instead of becoming entirely absorbed in a round of household cares and duties, the moment the crown of motherhood fell upon her...she had poured a new interest into the welfare of her race....[S]he soon became known as a friend and helper in the community in which she lived. Young girls...and young men...often came to consult her and to all her heart was responsive" (186). Determined that marriage and parenthood should not restrict her to caring only for her nuclear family, Mrs. Lasette becomes a surrogate mother and teacher to many of her neighbors, and especially those seeking "council and encouragement amid the different passages of their life [sic]" (186).³⁴

³⁴ Throughout the novel, we see her visiting Grandmother Harcourt's house for a conversation about the race; holding a salon for conversation in her own home (and inviting her former neighbors from ward 7 to mingle with other black thinkers from other parts of the city); and mentoring Annette both in her own home and in Annette's home. Harper tells us that "In lowly homes where she [Mrs. Lasette] visited, her presence was a benediction and an inspiration. Women careless in their household and slatternly in their dress grew more careful in the keeping of their homes and the arrangement of their attire. Women of the better class of their own race, coming among them, awakened their self-respect. Prejudice and pride of race had separated them from their white neighbors and the more cultured of their race had shrunk from them in their ignorance, poverty, and low social condition and they were left, in great measure, to themselves—ostracized by the whites on the one side and socially isolated from the more cultured of their race on the other hand" (198). As a model teacher, for both Annette and the reader, Mrs. Lasette demonstrates the proper cycle of personal and group advancement. She moves up in the world economically and intellectually, but she does not neglect her duty to reach back down (economically and intellectually) in order to help uplift those others of her race who have been less fortunate.

Mrs. Lasette also holds more formally structured salons for adult men and women, anticipating those *conversazione* Harper would describe later, in *Iola Leroy*:

Anxious to do what she could to benefit the community in which she lived, Mrs. Lasette threw open her parlors for the gathering together of the best thinkers and workers of the race, who choose [sic] to avail themselves of the privilege of meeting to discuss any question of vital importance to the welfare of the colored people of the nation. Knowing the entail of ignorance which slavery had left them, she could not be content by shutting herself up to mere social enjoyment within the shadow of her home (245-6).

Mrs. Lasette is proud that at her salons, blacks from different walks of life—both thinkers and workers—are able to meet and build fruitful connections that will advance individual and common goals, and compensate for differences of class and caste which tend to separate members of the local community. Her intimate meetings and salon gatherings model and mirror socially beneficial activities that her readers can follow in their own lives so that the whole community can together contemplate the pressing questions of the moment, and address the problems they face as a group. (Even Grandmother Harcourt gets into the act and hosts her own such gathering, 200-09).

Of course, the common thread between these two kinds of activities—Mrs. Lasette’s private counseling sessions with individual girls and women, and her hosting of community salons—is their emphasis on *talk*. Mrs. Lasette “regarded speech as one of heaven’s best gifts, and thought that conversation should be made one of the finest arts, and used to subserve the highest and best purposes of life,” and therefore she focuses

upon cultivating that skill in herself and in Annette (199). Carla Peterson has suggested that in *Iola Leroy*, Harper's narrator allowed "the political debates conducted by the folk...to anticipate the conversazione of the elite and to propose a similar program of racial uplift, thereby providing living testimony that the black masses can raise themselves out of degradation and slavery" ("Veil" 105). I would suggest here that Harper's focus on talk as a high art form in *Trial and Triumph* allows her to similarly present black oral culture as an effective educational tool.³⁵

This appreciation of oral culture is key to understanding Annette's use of the word, "shouting," in the exchange cited above between the girl and her teacher. In a final response to Mrs. Lasette's continuous and provocative questions about whether Annette thinks Mary Joseph is better, stronger, or smarter than she, Annette ultimately protests, "Now you are shouting," indicating a kind of frustration with her mentor's interrogatory method. Mrs. Lasette takes issue with Annette's use of this word:

"Why, Annette, where in the world did you get that slang?"

"Why, Mrs. Lasette, I hear the boys saying it in the street, and the girls in Tennis Court all say it, too. Is there any harm in it?"

"It is slang, my child, and a young lady should never use slang. Don't use it in private and you will not be apt to use it in public. However humble or poor a person may be, there is no use in being coarse or unrefined."

"But what harm is there in it?"

³⁵ Indeed, if we take these two novels together, we can trace an evolution of talk from oral slave culture through folk conversations and Socratic style teaching methods, and ultimately to the more exclusive salon conversazione of a kind of talented tenth.

“I don’t say that there is any, but I don’t think it nice for young ladies to pick up all sorts of phrases in the street and bring them into the home. The words may be innocent in themselves, but they may not have the best associations, and it is safer not to use them” (218-19).

Mrs. Lasette’s staunch objection to the word “shouting,” as slang, suggests that part of her feminine mentoring role is to sanitize Annette’s use of language and to monitor its effect in the home.³⁶

Mrs. Lasette’s objection here to this specific slang word is also a signal that “shouting” refers not simply to the raising of one’s voice but to something more coded and mysterious. In fact, “shouting” refers to a racially-specific style of singing “derived from, or related to, the declamatory sermons of the rural preacher” (1871, *OED*, 2nd edition). More particularly, as Harper’s readers would have known, “shouting” is rooted in the traditional west African culture of the Gullah people who were, starting in the early 1800s, enslaved on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and north Florida, but freed in 1861—just a few months after the Civil War began—when Union troops first invaded the area.³⁷ “Shouting” in Gullah culture involves more than just preaching: it is a

³⁶ She consistently takes on this role with other members of the A.P. community, too, and she “always regretted when [speech] was permitted to degenerate into gossip and backbiting....she always tried to raise the tone of conversation at home and abroad” (199-200), and “to teach mothers...how to build up light and happy homes” (197).

³⁷ Frequent references in the *Christian Recorder* to the practice of “shouting” make it likely that Harper’s readers would have perceived this connotation in Annette’s comment to Mrs. Lasette. See especially “Letter from North Carolina,” (dated February 28, printed in the March 25, 1865 issue). Orderly Sergeant Co. E 30th U. S. C. T., John W. Pratt, writes: “At the appearance of our troops [in Wilmington harbor, North Carolina] and the old flag the people gathered. I noticed an old man and woman, —both seemed to be lame,

method of beating a rhythm with one's hands and feet as a physical accompaniment to a preacher's sermon, and thus it is a means of participating in a vocal and active group who, in concert with the preacher, creates a complete religious service (Hutchisson par. 5).

Annette's reference to this black cultural form of worship draws attention to key similarities that exist between the "shouting" of the Sea Islanders and the conversation in which she is engaged with Mrs. Lasette. For example, both forms elevate the traditionally more passive receiver/listener (the student or parishioner) to an active and participatory status without diminishing the status or role of the authority figure (the teacher or preacher). Too, the A. P. community is similar to the Gullah community in that both are relatively isolated from other groups and are therefore somewhat resistant to change. Like the Sea Islanders, who did not have much contact with whites, or even with other Africans, (a factor that probably contributed to the preservation of their west African languages and traditions such as shouting), the A. P. community seems to Mrs. Lasette

shouting and giving God the praise, to see this day....The children shouted and clasped their hands. I was indeed speechless. I could do nothing but cry and look at the poor creatures overjoyed." Other noteworthy references to shouting apply that term to religious observance in black churches well beyond the Sea Islands. See "The Fair at Cincinnati," where it is described that "for an hour after the dismissal of the evening service the people remained in church, shouting and praising God" (December 29, 1866); see also "Letter from Maryland," which states that "as they leave the church many go away crying and shouting, and other under the influence of God" (December 8, 1866); and "From New Haven," a letter from one Jonathan Weaver noting that "on my arrival here [in New Haven] I heard that the good Lord was doing a great work among the people. I at once repaired to the church and found seven children shouting praises to God, who had pardoned and delivered them from their sins — and mourners at the altar praying for mercy" (October 8, 1864).

especially stagnant and in need of fresh influences.³⁸ Finally, Mrs. Lasette's sermonizing is thematically linked to Gullah shouting, since both emphasize the importance of having faith in God and in oneself: "You do not think that she can see or hear any better than you can or learn her lessons any quicker than you can," argues Mrs. Lasette, "and when it comes to a trial of strength that she is stronger than you are, now let me ask you one more question. Who made Miss Joseph?"

"Why, the Lord, of course."

"And who made you?"

"He made me, too." [...]

"Does God ever make any mistakes?"

"Why, no!"

In this stunning culmination of *elenchus* and "shouting," of interrogating and sermonizing, Mrs. Lasette's method demonstrates the principles of a politicized domesticity, which blends intimate conversation, the evocation of sentiment, and

³⁸ Moreover, the Gullah people's experience with rice agriculture in Africa had equipped them with specialized knowledge of terrain and crops such as those that were cultivated in the Sea Islands. This experience provided them some leverage in establishing a labor system unlike any other on the mainland, which allowed the slaves to determine how work would be divided among them.

The Gullah also enjoyed the first school for freed slaves, known as Penn Normal and Agricultural School, established on St. Helena Island in South Carolina in 1862. Charlotte Forten was the first black teacher to teach here, 1862-1864. For more information on shouting and Gullah culture, see Sterling Stuckey's introduction to his 1987 *Slave Culture*, esp. pp. 83-84.

proclamations of faith with the more assertive and “masculine” act of preaching and imparting wisdom.³⁹

Also critical to Harper’s instructional program for African-American youth is the practice of allowing one’s own interests and talents to dictate a path of formal and informal study, in and out of school. Again taking issue with one of Elliott’s suggestions—he argues that individual blacks should pursue individual paths toward success and become role models, where Harper asserts they should create wider avenues for success by becoming teachers—Harper here advises students to build expertise in a subject area or skill they can teach to others. Necessitated by the racism and neglect suffered by African-American youth in the nation’s public schools, Harper counsels students to tend diligently to their own passions and curiosities during school and non-school hours, to whatever extent possible, in order to maintain their interest in learning, and thus develop the discipline required for extended study of any subject.

Mr. Thomas, Annette’s other mentor, is an especially vocal advocate for this motive to study. He claims that “every woman, and man, too, should be...taught how to do some one thing so thoroughly so as to be able to be a worker in the world’s service,” and that “one thing” should spring from a person’s interest and aptitude, regardless of gender (203). In addition to his recommendation that black boys and girls should study subjects of personal relevance and interest, Mr. Thomas encourages his students to create

³⁹ It is worth noting that Annette’s conversation with Mrs. Lasette echoes and inverts a conversation in Harriet E. Wilson’s *Our Nig* (1859), between Frado and James Bellmont, her master’s son, in which Frado concludes that, since God made her black, and other people white, she “don’t like him” (51). Claudia Tate discusses this passage of the novel at some length in *Domestic Allegories* (esp. pp. 45).

for themselves public and professional personae that are skilled, assertive, and competitive. As a complement to Mrs. Lasette, who is perhaps too feminine to argue outright for these methods, Mr. Thomas helps teach Annette that her generation of black females can be pious and pure without having to be submissive or strictly domestic—in short, that they can model themselves after certain key features of the Cult of True Womanhood, but that they need not adhere so stringently to all of its tenets. Despite vehement opposition from many other black characters, as we shall see below, Mr. Thomas's pedagogical philosophy takes seriously the intellectual talents and ambitions of *all* black children, and prepares them for remunerative work that will enrich them personally, and the race, communally.

For Annette, the “one thing” in which she is most interested is literature. Her course of study revolves around her passion for reading and writing, and is motivated by both her own enthusiasm and the support she gets from her two mentors. From the novel’s opening pages, Harper shows Annette devouring poetry and prose, and learning that she has within herself a rich reserve of innate poetic talents and latent writing skills to develop; she even “talks about writing a book, and is always trying to make up what she calls poetry” (228, see also 185, 202). Annette forms an early ambition to be a professional writer, and the crucial support she receives in this area from Mr. Thomas fuels a desire to share her writing with audiences at school and at home. As we shall see below, Annette’s family and peers react with ambivalence and even fierce resistance to what they see as Annette’s frivolous craft and her selfish pursuit of personal satisfaction;

however, these responses only spark in Annette another, more altruistic urge to apply her literary talents to teaching and uplifting others of her race.

Where Mrs. Lasette concerns herself with Annette's inner life and conducts her training in a semi-private setting, Mr. Thomas is more concerned with Annette's professionalization, and her more public, writerly persona. Like Mrs. Lasette, Mr. Thomas understands that "with Annette, poetry was a passion born in her soul, and it was as natural for her to speak in tropes and figures as it was for others to talk in plain, common prose" (228). Perceiving the public space of the school as the best arena for Annette to practice her art, Mr. Thomas does all "he [can] to keep her interest in her studies from flagging" (227). Determined that Annette's talents should have a practical end, he focuses on preparing Annette for a vocation as a writer and readying her for remunerative work she will find fulfilling on a personal level, and enriching on a community level (203). Too, Mr. Thomas's approach to mentoring Annette is infused by his *own* assertive approach to making his way in the world. That is, when his livelihood is taken away because he is black, Mr. Thomas vows, "I am all at sea, but I am going to be like the runaway slave who, when asked, 'Where is your pass?' raised his fist and said 'Dem is my passes,' and 'If I don't see an opening, I will make one'" (186, 244). He similarly encourages Annette's efforts in writing and, having been "pleased and delighted" with "several of her early attempts at versification," shows them around "to a few of his most intellectual friends," aggressively publicizing her work and referring to her as "our inveterate poet" (228). Essential here is Mr. Thomas's ability, as a former schoolteacher, to perceive in Annette her latent talent; his good will to help her develop

those talents; his training as a teacher to devise methods for Annette to study and practice at home; and his respected position in the black community to advocate for Annette, protect her study time, and publicize her writerly skill among an African-American audience.

The assertive and competitive approach that Mr. Thomas forwards is well-suited to Annette's racially and ethnically mixed classroom—a sort of microcosm for the larger urban area in which she lives. Indeed, we are told that, as Annette ages, "the treatment of the saloon-keeper's daughter [Mary Joseph], and that of other girls of her ilk, has stung [Annette] into strength. She feels that however despised her people may be, that a monopoly of brains has not been given to the white race" (226-7). Annette eventually comes "to feel the social contempt which society has heaped upon the colored people, but she has determined not to succumb to it. There is force in the character of that fiery, impetuous and impulsive girl, and her school experience is bringing it out. She has been bending all her mental energies to compete [in a writing contest] for the highest prize at the commencement of her school" (227). The spirit of competition—for which the prize is the honor of delivering at her graduation an original essay composition, before a large community audience—pushes Annette to sharpen her talents, motivates her to continue reading and versifying, and fuels her resolve to succeed in the world of letters. Thus, by the middle of the novel, when Annette graduates and makes her eloquent, visionary, and passionate commencement speech on "The Mission of the Negro" (for she, of course, wins the competition), she reaps the rewards of her mentors' devotion and her own dedication to learning. Motivated study, at home and at school, helps Annette rise to the

top of her class and propels her onto a public stage to affirm that African-Americans are capable of exemplary academic achievement, and African-American females are worthy of the right to shape the political and social missions of the race.⁴⁰

Maledictory and Valedictory

I want to look more closely at the message of Annette's speech, because *what* she writes there is at least as important to Harper as the fact *that* she writes at all. First, however, we should recognize that Annette's support systems are only one part of the motivating force behind her success—her critics also play a large part in galvanizing Annette's intellectual energies. Indeed, it is both her triumphs *and* her trials that propel Annette to find her ultimate calling as a teacher. In numerous serial installments, many of the novel's other characters discuss and resist Annette's study habits and they express concern over the ways they expect her studies will impact Annette's ability to function in and contribute to society. It is useful to explore their objections to Annette's absorption in writing, since their arguments bring to life the post-Reconstruction-era debate over how black female education should be conducted and to what end. Especially instructive are the characters' motives for dismissing both Annette and her study habits, as these tend to adhere to the generation to which the character belongs—a neat classifying

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Jonathan Auerbach for reminding me that the black valedictorian becomes a standard trope in African-American literature, certainly by the time that Richard Wright pens *Black Boy* (1943) and Ralph Ellison writes *Invisible Man* (1952). Though I have not yet been able to verify this suspicion, it is possible that Harper's Annette Harcourt is the earliest instance of the black valedictorian in African-American fiction.

strategy that allows Harper to develop not only a nuanced sense of her opposition's arguments but a history, as well, of the ways in which three generations of African-Americans (including one born into slavery) perceive and debate black education. The eldest generation complains, for example, that there may be no use in educating Annette because it is as difficult for educated blacks to find work as it is for uneducated blacks in the current social climate. A slightly younger generation differently argues that domestic skills are the most important skills black females can have, and that it is foolish to prioritize formal academic education above more basic skills such as cooking and cleaning. Even Annette's own peers protest: too much education is snobbery. I agree with P. Joy Rouse and Frances Smith Foster that, by offering the perspectives of a multitude of African-American characters on this issue, Harper emphasizes its importance and promotes discussion that will engage *Christian Recorder* readers of all ages in the controversy over black female education (Rouse 128, Foster, "Gender" 53). Along the way, Harper rejects those who disdain female education while gradually foregrounding the idea that such a course is the surest way to develop individual intellect and ability, and the surest way to create African-American adult women who, with fully developed faculties, can do good work in the world and inspire others to do the same. It may seem curious that all of Annette's critics are female, though I contend that Harper's goal in this respect is to alert African-American females to the particular disservice they do when they neglect their special duty to support young females in their intellectual endeavors. Annette's grandmother, for example, complains that she does not see what good will come of so much schooling for her granddaughter. Her perspective is understandably

limited by her own life experiences: Susan Harcourt is a former slave, born and raised in the South. She herself bore and raised six children there, during an era that had only just begun to erect schools for black students (with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau) and, under those auspices, to train black boys for professional life and black girls for traditionally female domestic service or barely-skilled teaching jobs. Now residing in the North, Susan Harcourt supports the idea of Annette going to school, but she has trouble understanding why the girl should remain a student beyond the age of twelve or thirteen (216): ““What’s the use of giving her so much education? There are no openings for her here, and if she gets married she won’t want it”” (182). Though even Mrs. Harcourt once acknowledged (of her *own* children) that to educate young people for work and adulthood it is ideal to “first consult their tastes and inclinations,” still she understands that wisdom to apply only to males, whose gender affords them greater freedom than women have to pursue a wide variety of jobs (181). Mrs. Harcourt has special difficulty accepting the social and cultural transition that, in the post-Reconstruction era, is beginning to grant girls extensive educational training according to their “tastes and inclinations,” and the option to labor in jobs previously held only by men.

For the benefit of converting Susan Harcourt (and Harper’s readers of that grandmotherly generation), Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Lasette gently endorse the new educational climate, and offer proof that modern changes, such as extended educational training and equal opportunities for African-American males and females, are for the best, even though no one yet knows for sure what professional opportunities may arise for girls like Annette. Mr. Thomas mentions several females of Annette’s generation

whose intelligence and appreciation for school and professional opportunity helped them distinguish themselves inside and outside the community:

Mr. Clarkson had a very intelligent daughter whom he wished to fit for some other employment than that of a school teacher. He had her trained for a physician. She went to B., studied faithfully, graduated at the head of her class and received the highest medal for her attainments, thus proving herself a living argument in the capability of her race. Her friend, Miss Young, had artistic talent, and learned wood carving. She developed exquisite taste and has become a fine artist in that branch of industry (203).

Eventually, Mrs. Harcourt is won over. Speaking to Annette's skeptical aunt Eliza, she defends her decision to let Annette remain in school until she graduates: "“Maybe something will turn up that you don’t see just now. When a good thing turns up if a person ain’t ready they can’t take hold of it”" (229; also 182). Although this is not exactly a *ringing* endorsement for Annette's extended education, and although Susan Harcourt's change-of-heart may seem slight to modern readers, it is nevertheless a significant concession. Acknowledging that professional opportunities are on the increase for girls like Annette, even though Mrs. Harcourt herself cannot yet see those opportunities, is an important rhetorical move designed to model behavior for Harper's older audience, whom the author would similarly like to persuade.

Annette's aunt Eliza, a generation closer to Annette herself, is, surprisingly, much more hostile and more deeply entrenched in her opposition to her niece's education. Her most vehement attack against Annette's education comes when Annette shows her aunt a

poem she has written. Following Mr. Thomas's public promotion of her work, Annette declares with evident pride, "that is one of my best pieces." Her aunt quips back: "Oh, you have a number of best pieces...Can you cook a beefsteak?...You seem to think that there must be something very great about you. I know where you want to get. You want to get among the upper tens, but you haven't got style enough for that" (228). In Aunt Eliza's comment (constituting what may be the first literary reference to the concept of "the talented tenth," not to be articulated as such until W. E. B. DuBois's 1903 essay of the same name), Harper suggests that some adults in the black community may have perceived ambition like Annette's as an arrogant rejection of the less educated blacks in contemporary society (that other ninety percent whom DuBois would claim in 1903 had become cowards and vacillators, "faint-hearted" and "blind worshippers of the Average," afraid or without genius enough to rise up).⁴¹ It seems to Eliza that Annette's education has made the girl haughty and equipped her with unfair advantages over others of her race and sex who have developed primarily domestic skills. These advantages, furthermore, appear to Eliza to be based on selfishness and greed (because Annette's continued dependence costs money of Mrs. Harcourt), frivolous rather than helpful skills (writing poetry rather than cooking), undue conceit (she does not have enough "style" to be among the upper tens) and egotistic self-promotion (229-30).

Annette's peers and classmates, too, express disdain for her bookishness, not because they are jealous of the opportunities available to Annette so much as because

⁴¹ See DuBois's "The Talented Tenth" in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day* (43). See also Joy James's 1997 *Transcending the Talented Tenth*, which describes DuBois's rejection of his own theory in 1945.

they are aware they should be ashamed of their own laziness and lack of interest. When one classmate marvels aloud that Annette “is just as deep as the sea,” another responds, not without irony, “It is not that she’s so deep, but we are so shallow” (268). This comment underscores Harper’s point that Annette’s black classmates are making *choices* not to study: their laziness is not a quality of the race but a characteristic of these particular teenaged girls who have the (improbable, fictional) insight to recognize that they are mistaken to revere beauty over intellect (which they nevertheless continue to do). They read Annette’s attentiveness to her work as a sign that she thinks herself too good for them: “She don’t care for anything but books,” they scowl; “oh she is so self conceited, and thinks she knows more than any one else” (270). Additionally, they cannot relate to a female so stubbornly uncaring about her appearance as Annette: Aunt Eliza reports that the other girls “all say that she is very odd and queer and often goes out into the street as if she never saw a looking glass”(230). Stung and threatened by what they perceive to be Annette’s rejection of values they prize—chiefly, social charm and beauty—Annette’s peers sting back, refusing to invite her to most parties and ignoring her at those few events she does attend (268). Of course, Harper agrees that these girls are shallow, and decries the young social set who “took life as a holiday”; “the lack of noble purpose and high and holy aims,” she wrote, “left its impress on their souls...” (226). Harper argues that these girls’ “parents have failed to strengthen” their children’s character, and worries that they will confirm the suspicion of some whites that, for the black race, emancipation has signified nothing more than freedom from responsibility (202). These classmates of Annette—raised by women envious like Eliza and ignorant

like Susan, in the “atmosphere of moral contagion” that is Tennis Court—suffer because they have not learned to rightly value the program of self-education on which Annette has embarked.

Taken separately and over the course of many serial installments, most of these characters’ complaints about female education are easy to dismiss because the complainants themselves are presented as unenlightened, resentful, and lazy. However, taken together they achieve, if not a set of strong arguments then, at least, a compellingly loud chorus of African-American voices that Harper may have culled from her own experiences as a schoolgirl, and from audiences at her various speaking engagements and women’s meetings. Clearly, she found it important to articulate and refute these viewpoints because she knew that if social outcomes developed according to these characters’ ideas, girls would continue to be educated for domestic service, or what is worse, they would be entrusted to teach others despite the fact that their own intellectual achievements and abilities would never be more than a few steps ahead of their own students. Annette, and girls like her, would be more interested in looking fashionable and being popular than in improving their minds and improving the race; there would be no black “upper tens” to lead African-Americans from inside the race, up and out of oppressive conditions such as those existing in A.P. and toward increasingly greater social, legal, and intellectual freedoms.

Commencement

Ultimately, Harper forgives her characters their apathetic, jealous, and antiquated views, explaining that the most deep-seated reason for their resistance to Annette is a lack of confidence in their own abilities deriving from the race's past enslavement: "They were living," her narrator explains, "too near the poverty, ignorance, and debasement of the past to have developed much race pride, and a glowing enthusiasm in its progress and development. Although they were of African descent, they were Americans whose thoughts were *too much Americanized* to be wholly free from imbibing the social atmosphere with which they were in constant contact" (239-40, my emphasis). Thus, she concludes, it is not "to be wondered at, if under the circumstances, some of the more cultured of A.P. thought it absurd to look for anything remarkable to come out of the black Nazareth of Tennis Court" (240). As much as any single character's or generation's ideas about female education, Harper finds that the imposition of (white) American cultural values upon blacks is also responsible for their lack of faith in Annette, and in themselves.

Harper links each of the black community's arguments against Annette's education to its acceptance of gender inequity and racial self-hatred, both of which, she implies, spring from the race's past enslavement. By blaming slavery as the real source of these problems, Harper can deflect the black community's anger away from Annette, in particular, and from female self-education, in general, redirecting it toward a more deserving target: the history of bondage and compulsory ignorance. Ultimately, Annette's education helps her (and Harper's reader) to understand that her anger, and her

community's anger, springs from the same source. Moreover, their shared goal—of "getting out of slavery," as Elliott would put it—can best be served by reinscribing their communal trials as stepping stones toward communal triumph.

Annette herself embodies this shift in three key ways, providing models for how the reading audience can also reshape the legacy of slavery from a devastating and oppressive force to an obstacle or trial on the race's path to triumph. One of these we have seen already: her self-motivated and mentor-motivated course of study helps Annette to combat the oppression and ignorance suffered by all Africans and African-Americans who, under thralldom, could not study what they pleased nor train for remunerative employment, and who continued to believe (as they were taught) that they were innately inferior to whites. By attending school *and* by continuing her education independently, outside of school, Annette becomes a symbol of the new African-American freedom to participate in the nation's opportunities for personal success through gradual academic achievement and persistent effort.

Additionally, though, Annette celebrates two commencements which suggest how her education will help the race rise above the legacies of slavery, and it is with a consideration of these twin celebrations that I would like to close this chapter. In Annette's valedictory speech (at her first commencement, near the center of the text), she argues that the mission of the African-American race—indeed, its inevitable trajectory—is to move from the pagan naivete of Africa, downward through the depths of slavery, and ultimately up to the pinnacle of modern civilization. Her speech makes use of Annette's education in history, reading, and public speaking, and communicates to the

entire assembled audience (readers included) that formal education crucially enables the oppressed race to finally tell its own story, to wrest history away from the “victors.” Ultimately, Annette becomes a teacher, helper, and friend to a Southern black community before she is finally reunited with Clarence Luzerne (in a second commencement, at the end of the novel), during her thirty-first birthday party in the novel’s final scene. I refer to this culminating scene as a commencement of sorts because, even though it is not literally a formal school graduation, it does clearly mark an end to one period of Annette’s education in life, and the beginning of another.⁴² Just as Annette’s discouraging experiences as a schoolgirl are redeemed by her success as valedictorian, Harper claims that “the strange trial [of Clarence’s wife resurfacing (see fn.31)] was destined to bring joy and gladness and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness in the future” (282). Annette’s two commencements finally serve to anchor her at the center of two black neighborhoods, one in the North and one in the South, symbolically inscribing this educated black female at the core of a nationwide African-American community. Both commencements also heavily emphasize Annette’s femininity, her “politicized domesticity,” by deflecting attention away from her public speaking role (which is perceived as masculine), for example, and toward the sentimentality of her

⁴² It is important to recognize that Annette first travels to the South to be a teacher only after she and Clarence painfully part ways: after Clarence’s wife—whom he believed to be dead—surfaces in the city of A.P., Annette insists that Clarence fulfill his obligations to her, and breaks off their engagement. Distraught, Annette seeks the counsel of Mrs. Lasette, saying “I must have a change; I must find relief in action,” upon which Mrs. Lasette finds a teaching position for Annette in the South: “Here she soon found work to enlist her sympathy and bring out all the activity in her soul. She had found her work, and the people among whom she labored had found their faithful friend” (281-2).

commencement speech, or by focusing on Annette's romance plot with Luzerne at the same time as her community is celebrating her intellectual and professional successes. The act of balancing Annette's personal determination and success with her key attribute of self-surrender helps Harper to paint a picture of an ideal, adult female race leader who understands that her own trials and triumphs are inextricably linked to the trials and triumphs of blacks everywhere.

In Annette's first commencement, her graduation from school, she presents a valedictory speech that she has written. Harper's description of Annette's "remarkable production" bears reproducing in its entirety, so as to make clear the precise way that Harper imagines great female leaders can transform even slavery into an opportunity for learning and growth :

At first she portrayed an African family seated beneath their bamboo huts and spreading palms; the light steps of the young men and maidens tripping to music, dance, and song; their pastimes suddenly broken upon by the tramp of merchants of flesh and blood; the capture of the defenceless [sic] people suddenly surprised in the midst of their sports, the cries of distress, the crackling of flames, the cruel oaths of reckless men, eager for gold though they coined it from tears and extracted it from blood; the crowding of the slaveships, the horrors of the middle passage, and the sad story of ages of bondage. It seemed as if the sorrow of centuries was sobbing in [Annette's] voice. Then the scene changed, and like a grand triumphal march she recounted the deliverance of the Negro, and the wondrous change which had come over his condition; the slave pen exchanged

for the free school, the fetters on his wrist for the ballot in his right hand. Then her voice grew musical when she began to speak of the mission of the Negro....“His mission,” she said, “is grandly constructive.” Some races had been “architects of destruction,” but their mission was to build over the ruins of the dead past, the most valuable thing that a man or woman could possess on earth, and that is good character. That mission should be to bless and not to curse. To lift up the banner of the Christian religion from the mire and dust into which slavery and pride of caste had trailed it, and to hold it up as an ensign of hope and deliverance to other races of the world, of whom the greater portion were not white people. It seemed as if an inspiration lit up the young face; her eye glowed with unwonted fervor; it seemed as if she had fused her whole soul into the subject, which was full of earnestness and enthusiasm (240-1).

As Harper’s narrator represents it, Annette’s performance incorporates the experience of capture and enslavement into a sweeping cathartic narrative that both grieves and puts into the “dead past” the history of African-American slavery. The movement Annette charts, through grief into deliverance, is feminized by Harper’s sentimental vocabulary (her “sobbing” yet “musical voice,” for example) and Annette’s own emphasis on Christian faith (which is not only her subject, but the rationale underlying her public speech: she is not daring to be political and rhetorically skilled so much as baring her earnest and enthusiastic, faithful “soul”). Ultimately, she portrays the African-American race as a model for other races because they will demonstrate how to rise above slavery

by building good, Christian character—typically, a mother's custodial role, as we saw in my first chapter—and proselytizing to all the world.

Harper's feminizing of Annette's valedictory moment is frustrating to modern readers because in this, Annette's finest hour of the novel thus far, Harper does not allow us to hear Annette's words directly. Instead, we are given the narrator's synopsis of the speech and report *about* the speech. Too, though the solitary, somewhat introverted (and feminized) behaviors of reading and writing that Annette engaged in her youth is metamorphosed into (more typically masculine) public speaking at her graduation, we are denied the experience of "hearing" Annette's speech, which finally demonstrates to her very critical black community audience how her talents can uplift them to greater thought and action. I would argue, however, that this device functions to take Annette out of the spotlight in a way, returning to her an air of demure femininity that Harper saw as necessary for female leaders to maintain. The description of Annette's performance nonetheless proves wrong all of those detractors who had feared Annette's schooling would be useless (Grandmother Harcourt), or make the girl selfish and conceited (Aunt Eliza), or haughty and introverted (her peers), for the subject and tenor of her speech verifies that Annette's education has not made her *self-centered* but *selfless*. As she describes the forced migration of captured Africans, the middle passage overseas, and the periods of enslavement, emancipation, and Reconstruction, Annette foregrounds the history of an entire people—not her own achievement—as inspiration.

Nevertheless, Annette in fact becomes a race leader in this scene: "Men gr[o]w thoughtful and attentive," and "women tender and sympathetic," as they listen to her

speak about the race's past and its future greatness (241). Her valedictory performance also demonstrates that Annette can operate within the confines of the educational system and master its prescribed skills, that she can pass through her own personal trials and emerge triumphant. Her perseverance in reading and writing beyond the classroom, moreover, has taught her that she must transcend the limitations of the racist school system (which would never have included the empowering lesson of that speech) if she wants to fulfill her own "rich possibilities" and "set young hearts to thrilling with higher hopes and loftier aspirations" (185). And though Annette does not in fact find work as a writer—she becomes a teacher, instead—the verbal eloquence and concern for her race that she develops while learning to write for a public audience serves that noble professional aim, too.

Indeed, when the novel ends eighteen years after it began, we see Annette at the very center of her adopted Southern community, the epitome of politicized domesticity that balances public activism and self-motivation (taught by Mr. Thomas) with maternal and domestic pursuits (imparted by Mrs. Lasette). In the novel's final pages, we see Annette

doing what she could to teach, help and befriend those on whose chains the rust of ages had gathered....Her home was a beautiful place of fragrance and flowers.

Groups of young people were gathered around their teacher listening eagerly to a beautiful story she was telling them. Elderly women were scattered in little companies listening to or relating some story of Annette's kindness to them and their children (284).

In the end, her education prepares Annette to champion students of her own race, just as she was once championed by her own mentors. Her withdrawal into the heart of an all-black community is a fitting metaphor for what Harper sees as the aim of Annette's entire course of study—to become a leader who can uplift the race from the inside, and start a new cycle that creates more mentors for future generations of black children. Even here, on the novels' final pages, Harper adheres to Elliott's prescription from "We Must Educate" that, "at the age of thirty every one...ought to have something to show for the way he has used his time and talent," but she also is sure to emphasize that as Annette's personal trials have become her personal triumphs, she has not been satisfied merely to be a role model for others (332). Instead, Annette has yoked her own success to the success of her community.

In fact, even at the novel's end, when Annette is well past her school days, Harper continues to put off her marriage and motherhood, subordinating the importance of actual motherhood to the importance of Annette's more figurative, maternal role at the center of her new community. Luzerne, we are told,

had not come to separate her from her cherished life work, but to help her in uplifting and helping those among whom her lost was cast as a holy benediction, and so after years of trial and pain, their souls had met at last, strengthened by duty, purified by that faith which works by love, and fitted for life's highest and holiest truths (284).

Harper's acknowledgment that romantic love need not be forsaken by intellectual women nevertheless resists the conventional ending of the sentimental or domestic novel, which

would have portrayed Annette and Clarence's wedding, and quite possibly imagined a domestic scene in which two happy parents dote over a new, baby girl. By contrast, the final lines of the text show Annette and Lutzerne doting over the crowd of her figurative children, who have gathered to celebrate their "mother" Annette's 31st birthday.

The circle of affectionate ties that bind Annette, Lutzerne, and Annette's "students," illustrates the finally-realized aims of Annette's own education. Via her trying experiences with formal schooling (where she first learned to read and write, and also to take pride in herself and her race), the naysaying of her various family and neighbors (which encouraged her to persevere, despite obstacles in her path), and the help of her male and female community-based mentors (who assisted her in devoting her personal talents to the welfare of others), Annette has improved herself and become a model race leader, as dedicated to her people as they are to her. Importantly, the help that she gives to others now does *not* occur within the context of a formal school, but in informal neighborhood gatherings at neighborhood homes, such as the one that closes Harper's novel. In fact, it does not appear that a formal school exists in Annette's new town. Instead, her intimate relationships with all of her neighbors—on display in the stories people tell of her kindness, and in their evident acceptance of her as a kind of neighborhood mother-figure—will provide a semi-private, semi-public context for teaching and learning as Annette guides others toward self-sufficiency and race leadership.

Harper's apparent suspicion of the formal school in this novel invokes fertile comparisons with the works I examined in earlier chapters of this dissertation, and suggests directions for further study. While all of the texts I have analyzed here demonstrate that adolescent female education was, from its inception in America, perceived to conjoin formal schools and other socio-cultural institutions (and never as a strict function of the schools alone), Stoddard's *The Morgesons* and Holmes's *Elsie Venner* place much greater emphasis than do the later texts on the influence of the formal school upon the process of molding adolescent girls into ideal American women. In both of those texts, the schools evoke an "atmosphere of relentless regulation" via ever-watchful teachers, large groups of vigilantly critical students, and intrusive pedagogical attitudes. By contrast, the *Wreath of Cherokee Rose Buds*, *Wynema*, and *Trial and Triumph* each imagine the formal school as an auxiliary to the process of raising girls, with far less imposing or complete authority. Thus, readers of these texts gain a dimmer portrait of their school settings, but a more distinct picture of the intimate relationships that their schoolgirls share with teachers and other community members as they learn life lessons in and out of school. No doubt, the relative impact of the formal school and the other kinds of institutions we have been looking at here is distinguished by subtle degrees: I am not suggesting that, in the earlier texts, schools are portrayed as all-powerful, and in the later texts, they are without power, but that, on the contrary, as the century progresses, adolescent female education is increasingly represented as a process that occurs more and more frequently outside of school, or in a more even and balanced way both within and outside of school grounds.

Clearly, the race and ethnicity of the student populations at these schools has significant bearing on this phenomenon: unlike Cassandra Morgeson and Elsie Venner, whose educational experiences in mostly-white New England schools were focused on improving the individual girls and bringing them into conformity with models of (white) womanhood, the Rose Buds, Wynema, and Annette Harcourt receive educations that are more outwardly focused—beyond themselves, beyond narrow conceptions of gender that would keep females within some private sphere, and beyond the individual schools—and which aim at preparing the girls to improve other people of their sex, tribal group, and race. Yet race and ethnicity, however important, are not the only factors contributing to the gradual diminution of formal school authority over the lives of adolescent females in America. To be sure, other conditions we have explored here—for example, demographic changes, class struggles, and the rise and fall of numerous other socio-cultural institutions over the course of the nineteenth century—played a part in these changes. It is my hope that this study will encourage others to locate and prosecute additional narratives of adolescent girls’ schooling, so that we may understand more fully how the intellectual, physical, and emotional experiences of growing up female in nineteenth century America was imagined and construed.

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