

EDUCATING THE READER

Negotiation in Nineteenth-Century Popular Girls' Stories

by

Laura M. Robinson

**A thesis submitted to the Department of English
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario

April, 1998

copyright © Laura M. Robinson, April 1998



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-27853-0

Canada

To the memory of Janet Rodgers Robinson (1933-1997)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Maggie Berg for her excellent supervision: her diligent editing, expertise in feminist theory, and, not least importantly, warm encouragement guided me through each step of the process. My gratitude also extends to Professor Tracy Ware who was not only a rigorous reader but also a steady voice of reason in my moments of discouragement or confusion. Both Maggie and Tracy have provided me with models of academic professionalism and excellence which are inspiring and which I will do my best to emulate. Queen's University provided funding, both for my Ph.D and for travel to Prince Edward Island for research. Mount Allison University also provided a Winthrop Pickard Bell Fellowship for Research in Acadia to facilitate my research on Montgomery. My family embraced my studies with unflagging support and an enthusiasm unanticipated by me: they made all the difference through some extremely trying times. The friends who have seen me through this project proved invaluable: Doug and Shirley Zwicker were my surrogate family; Michael Thompson gave me a belief in myself; Susan Korba was my strength; Barbara Seeber broadened my views; Paula Gillis believed in me; Laura FitzGerald offered perspective; Raymond Ludwin kept me grounded; Suzie Currie inspired me; the gang at The Grad Club, particularly Sam Laldin, Sarah Hill, and Dave Smith, were always there with a smile, a beer, and a temporary escape from academic pursuits. David Kerr saw me through the final hectic days. I feel extremely lucky and very grateful. Thank you all.

Abstract

Coming from a cultural studies and feminist perspective which suggests that texts do not simply reflect but also construct reality, I argue that Charlotte M. Yonge, Lousia May Alcott, and L.M. Montgomery educate their readers about the valuable skill of negotiation in their novels, The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables, respectively. I argue that these popular girls' stories, rather than simply depicting the heroine as a victim of social pressure, highlight the heroine's agency. I outline my theoretical position in the introduction: the inherently didactic nature of literature suggests that readers always learn about potential subject positions. In chapter one, I explore the authors' agency in negotiating the cultural scripts they have inherited: by calling attention to traditional genres and plots and by emphasizing how they are re-writing these stories, the authors underscore their own agency in creating new cultural scripts for their heroines. In chapter two, I examine the contradictions inherent in the heroine's family life. By both celebrating family life and exposing it as potentially oppressive, these three novels emphasize the heroine's agency in negotiating a solution to her only option--family living. Finally, in chapter three, I trace the heroine's clever negotiations of contradictory gender identity. The heroine constructs her own sense of a coherent identity that is at odds with traditional femininity yet receives acceptance from her community. In the conclusion, I examine the sequels to these stories and show that, even while the heroine seems to retreat from the action of the stories, her agency continues to be underscored. Ultimately, the heroine is an active subject, one who acts and creates, even in the face of powerlessness and oppression: the lesson to the reader is to acknowledge limitations and restraints, but also to negotiate for change. Agency is always possible.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction Embracing Contradiction and the Glad Game	1
Chapter One Love, Duty, Ambition: Negotiating Plot	30
Chapter Two There's No Place Like Home: Negotiating Family	76
Chapter Three The Female Subject: Negotiating Identity	115
Conclusion Happily Ever After: Negotiating the Ending	172
Works Cited	208
Vita	219

Introduction

Embracing Contradiction and The Glad Game

Wholeness can only exist by maintaining contradiction, but this is not easy.

--Jessica Benjamin

I am often afraid it cannot be right or safe to live so entirely at ease,
and without contradictions.

--Charlotte M. Yonge

Eleanor H. Porter's Pollyanna (1912) tells the story of a young orphan girl, Pollyanna, who is sent to live with a rigid, unloving aunt. Pollyanna conquers the town and her aunt by her irrepressible gladness. Her perpetual cheerfulness results from a game she used to play with her father, a poor minister. Once, when she hoped for a doll in a missionary barrel from the Ladies' Aid, Pollyanna received crutches instead. Her father taught her how to overcome bitter disappointment by playing the glad game: "The game was to just find something about everything to be glad about," Pollyanna explains to Nancy, the aunt's housekeeper (Porter 43). She could be happy about the crutches, she elaborates, because she did not need them. She further explains why she is glad about her barren room in her aunt's lavish house, and Nancy struggles not to cry.

While Pollyanna has been dismissed, even villified,¹ as saccharin and too happy, the glad game serves as a paradigm for what is the strength of girls' stories.² The heroines of novels such as Pollyanna, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, and What Katy Did reinterpret their often unfortunate and unjust circumstances, both drawing attention to, and deflecting the intensity of, their painful emotions. Arguably, the girls' strategy for coping with pain is not liberatory: if they only reinterpret and remain content with their oppressive situations, they perpetuate the *status quo*. The message of such stories can be that of touting conformity and accommodation to one's circumstances. However, this perspective

acknowledges only how a strategy like the glad game avoids confronting oppression. The glad game also subtly contests the justice of Pollyanna's circumstances. By repeating the story to each person she meets, Pollyanna is able to express, repeatedly, her discontent with her lot, even while disavowing resentment. By working so assiduously at recuperating her gladness, Pollyanna continually draws attention to her unfortunate circumstances and her despair. The doubleness of Pollyanna's glad game also reveals the most prominent feature of the girls' story--the ability to embrace contradiction. At one and the same time, and without seeming struck by the contradiction, Pollyanna articulates her gladness and her discontent.

Several feminist literary critics, including Chris Weedon and Lillian Robinson, suggest that popular novels, like Pollyanna, can be powerful vehicles for disseminating and naturalizing dominant ideologies, especially of gender. My thesis explores the construction of the female subject-- how feminine gender ideology is manifested in the construction of the heroine--in popular nineteenth-century girls' stories, focusing on British Charlotte M. Yonge's The Daisy Chain (1856), American Louisa May Alcott's Little Women (1868-69) and Canadian L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables (1908)--all female Bildungsromane, or novels of a young heroine coming of age. The education of the heroine, the defining feature of the Bildungsroman, becomes the education of the reader as well, because the reader discovers, through engagement with the text, a new world view. The heroine, and thus the reader, learns that she is contained in, and must negotiate with, her community for her sense of identity. Young Ethel from The Daisy Chain wants to pursue her self-education, for example; but, in the face of family tragedy, she must take on the traditional role of domestic woman and put her dreams aside. While awkwardly accepting her new position, Ethel nevertheless manages to establish education as a primary focus for herself, setting up a school for the poor, assisting her siblings with their schooling, and keeping up her own reading in her spare time. The spirited heroines of girls' stories manage to get as close to their dreams as possible, given the restraints of

community expectations. The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables present a young woman's cheerful survival through negotiation with her community, while, like Pollyanna, they also carefully enumerate the injustices, oppression, and repression the heroine faces on her path to adulthood: each author ultimately challenges the status quo, while allowing her heroine to establish a sense of self that is both independent and interdependent. Like Pollyanna, each heroine, and therefore the reader, learns to embrace contradiction, to negotiate, and to locate agency.

While I am arguing that the reader is educated by the text, the reader's relationship to the text is ever-elusive: it cannot be pre-determined, defined, or fixed. Michel de Certeau points out that "consumers" of culture, rather than being passive, "manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them" (de Certeau xiv). Consumers "poach" upon other's property and continually transform it in the act of consuming. De Certeau argues that the reader insinuates him- or herself into the writer's text:

This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient. Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories In the same way the users of social codes turn them into metaphors and ellipses of their own quests. (de Certeau xxi-xxii)

The consumers of culture use cultural products in often surprising ways. No one can determine how a consumer will consume. Who readers will identify with, how they will respond to that identification, whether they will engage with or resist the dominant narrative message are questions that cannot be answered once and for all. Much of my analysis seems to assume the reader's identification with the heroine; however, this identification is not necessary for the reader to be educated by the text. Indeed, the reader does not need to align herself with the heroine to learn the heroine's way of being, her particular subjectivity, her world view. The reader is exposed to the cultural scripts in the text: the

generic conventions, the family politics, the gender constructions, for example. Even a resisting reader will learn, if only to reject, the world view presented by the text. A new and unique cultural script, based on the framework of the novel, is always constructed and disseminated as the reader reads. What happens after that, in de Certeau's words, is part of the readers' "own quests."

Therefore, I do not propose to offer a single definitive and fixed reading of the novels, nor do I propose to suggest exactly what the reader learns. My particular reading of these stories is constructed, in part, by my own ideological position and subjectivity, as a white, Western feminist. I cannot possibly postulate how a reader with an extremely different background than myself-- a young black woman or an adult gay male, for example--might read these books. Instead, I will show some of the contradictory messages that riddle girls' stories and the ways in which the heroines negotiate the contradictions. In order to pick apart the contradictory ideology which the heroines negotiate, I will adopt the strategy of feminist criticism advocated by Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt, which is to embrace the contradictions in the texts (Newton and Rosenfelt xxiii). They call for a dialectical approach which "locates movement, transformation, process in the incompatible development of two necessarily related entities . . . or in the contradictory aspects of a single phenomenon" (Newton and Rosenfelt xxvi). This approach enables the critic to "locate in the same situation the forces of oppression and the seeds of resistance; to construct women in a given moment in history simultaneously as victims and as agents" (Newton and Rosenfelt xxii). Mary Poovey also uncovers the contradictory elements of ideology, which she explains "may look coherent and complete" but is, in retrospect, "fissured by competing emphases and interests" (Poovey 3). Poovey suggests that "signifying practices always produce meanings in excess of what seems to be the text's explicit design," which is why she discusses the "multiple effects that texts produce" (Poovey 16). Like Poovey, I will attempt to articulate the various contradictory messages, the conflicted ideologies, of each novel. Rosemary Hennessey explains, like Newton and

Rosenfelt and Poovey, that “[t]extual crises--gaps, contradictions, aporias--indicate the failure of the hegemonic discourse[, the dominant, “coherent” side to ideology,] to seal over or manage successfully the contradictions displaced in the texts of culture” (Hennessy 28). The aim is “not to heal over or resolve cultural crisis, but to demonstrate that internal contradictions in a cultural text are the product of crises in the larger social formation, contradictions that cannot be satisfied by the system at present” (Hennessy 28). By identifying these contested areas, by exposing the contradictions, the critic can locate the agency of the young heroines of the Bildungsroman alongside their apparent accommodation to their community. Moreover, the education of the heroine, resulting in her successful negotiation of contradictory ideology, educates the reader simply by presenting a new subject position which the reader may use to make sense of his or her self.

Louis Althusser’s theory of Ideological State Apparatuses is helpful for understanding the ideological work of literature and how the reader may be educated by the text. Althusser argues that “in order to exist, every social formation must reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces, and in order to be able to produce” (Althusser 124). The state’s reproduction of its conditions of production consists of reconstituting both the necessary skills and “submission to the rules of the established order” (Althusser 127). Consent of citizens is achieved through disseminating the dominant ideology through Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), Althusser claims. While the plurality of often contradictory ISAs--which include religion, education, the family, the legal system, politics, and culture--seem to belong to the private domain, they are in fact instituted by and serve the dominant class who controls the Repressive State Apparatuses (the government, the police, the military, and so on). While ISAs work through ideology, RSAs implement more overtly material methods for control. Althusser explains that ISAs allow a voice for exploited peoples and classes because of their contradictory nature; however, “the unity of the different Ideological State Apparatuses is secured, usually in

contradictory forms, by the ruling ideology, the ideology of the ruling class” (Althusser 142). Defining ideology as representing “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 153), or an individual’s interpretation of his/her relation to his/her material conditions, Althusser believes that ideology exists through its material practice. How people act, what they do, say, write, the rituals they follow, all stem from and determine their ideological beliefs. Ideology exists only within and through an apparatus. Through ISAs, individuals recognize their subject positions—class and gender, for example—and act in appropriate ways.

Most importantly, ideology operates to constitute individuals as subjects by hailing or interpellating them. Althusser isolates an ambiguity in the term “subject” by recognizing two definitions: “(1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission” (Althusser 169). One senses oneself to be a free subject, in Althusser’s view, when one is freely accepting subjection. Literature, as one facet of the cultural ISA, can have a didactic effect of interpellating the reader by presenting a subject position that the reader recognizes and uses to understand his or her own material conditions. Poovey argues that the “language and organization of any text make reading constitutive of the reader as well as of meaning” by “establishing identification . . . ; reproducing values and the symbolic economy that underwrites them . . . ; and providing various narrative paradigms that make the reading experience repeat, so as to affirm, the structure of the reading subject’s identity” (Poovey 16-17). The often conflicting ideological messages imparted in narrative become particularly significant: they do not just reflect the ideology of a given historical moment, but operate to shape ideology. Graeme Turner explains that “[c]ulture, as the site where meaning is generated and experienced, becomes a determining, productive field through which social realities are constructed, experienced and interpreted” (Turner 14).

While literature has the potential to shape an individual's understanding of the world, by providing a subject position from which to command a perspective, the reader does not necessarily receive ideology passively. From a post-Althusserian perspective, John Stephens makes a special case for examining the ideology in children's literature:

Children's fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience. Childhood is seen as the crucial formative period in the life of a human being, the time for basic education about the nature of the world, how to live in it, how to relate to other people, what to believe, what and how to think--in general--the intention is to render the world intelligible.

(Stephens 8)

Stephens claims that "fiction must be regarded as a special site for ideological effect, with a potentially powerful capacity for shaping audience attitudes" (Stephens 3). He writes:

The implication for audiences of literary fiction is that they will, as part of the reading process, invoke an 'appropriate' subject position from past experience, which may correspond to a lesser or greater degree with experiences described in the text, or else they will either be inscribed in a subject position ready made within the text or construct a subject position from materials to hand in the text. (Stephens 55)

The readers of girls' stories, for example, might recognize subject positions with which they can identify or not, just as Anne identifies with Tennyson's Lily Maid in Anne of Green Gables. Stephens elaborates:

If a function of children's literature is to socialize its readers, identification with focalizers [a main character] is one of its chief methods, since by this means, at least for the duration of the reading time, the reader's own selfhood is effaced and the reader internalizes the perceptions and attitudes of the focalizer and is thus reconstituted as a subject within the text. (Stephens 68)

Through identification with the protagonist of a story, then, the reader confronts an ideology which he or she may use to make intelligible his or her own material conditions. However, Stephens' statement that the reader's selfhood is effaced, potentially and unnecessarily denies the reader agency. As he says himself, "we can never know what happens when a reader reads" (Stephens 48).

Stephen's belief in the reader's self-effacement points to a central problem in Althusser's theory--the passivity of the hailed subject. Althusser recognizes the contradictions inherent in ideology and allows for resistance to the dominant class who works to control and maintain ideology: "The class in power cannot lay down the law in the ISAs as easily as it can in the (repressive) State apparatuses . . . because the resistance of the exploited classes is able to find means and occasions to express itself there, either by the utilization of their contradictions, or by conquering combat positions" (Althusser 140). However, critics of his work have hesitated over his understanding of what it means to be interpellated as a subject, believing that he regards the hailed individual as unconsciously and passively accepting the dominant ideology.³ For example, by inverting Althusser's basic premise, Teresa de Lauretis attempts to compensate for what she sees as a determinism that denies the subject agency:

To assert that the social representation of gender affects its subjective construction and that, vice versa, the subjective representation of gender--or self-representation--affects its social construction, leaves open a possibility of agency and self-determination at the subjective and even individual level of micropolitical and everyday practices which Althusser himself would clearly disclaim.

(de Lauretis 9)⁴

Like myself, Ellen Messer-Davidow would disagree with de Lauretis' interpretation of Althusser: interpellation can be a site of agency for the individual. While Althusser's theory "appears to preclude the possibility that 'subjects,' as an effect of social structure, can act otherwise," Messer-Davidow argues, instead, that "all economic, social, and

cultural entities are both determined and determining” in Althusser’s model (Messer-Davidow 27, 28). The subject position that calls to the individual may be recognized and, indeed, adopted by the individual; however, in accepting the hailing subjectivity, the individual is always re-constituting the subject position. Thus, subjectivity is not only always already there, but always in the process of being re-articulated. Likewise, Rastko Mocnik, arguing that “ideology is absolutely necessary for any human relation to be possible,” because communication relies on “solidarity of beliefs” (Mocnik 141), suggests that interpellation is actively achieved by the individual. Rather than viewing the individual as merely called, passively and unconsciously, to a subject position by ideology, Mocnik believes that “the active part played by the interpellated individual consists precisely in her/his helping to establish a ‘facade’—an ideological effect of coherence” (Mocnik 150). To bring this back to Pollyanna playing the glad game: hearing of the glad game from her father is Pollyanna’s call to ideology. Recognizing and accepting the role of glad girl, Pollyanna actively conveys this image to her community, rarely allowing for any response but a happy one. In so doing, she presents a seemingly coherent ‘facade’ of gladness. However, as I have already pointed out, this coherence is simply a “facade” or ideological effect because Pollyanna also succeeds in revealing numerous reasons for misery in the very act of searching for something to occasion gladness. In each re-articulation of the game, she alters the original subject by linking the grief with the gladness. The glad game is adopted and rearticulated by different individuals in the novel, always with a different effect. The individuals’ alterations of the subject position which has hailed them constitutes their active agency.

If the subjectivity presented in a fictional text has the effect of interpellating the reader, the reader does not, then, have to be regarded as lacking agency. Stephens writes: “The reading subject, as in an actual world pragmatic exchange, may negotiate meaning with the text or be subjected to it” (Stephens 48). This recognition that the reader can respond to ideology without losing agency (although not always), touches on a debate in

feminism which Susan Hekman identifies between social constructionists and liberal, socialist, and radical feminists. Where social constructionists believe that “all subjects are constituted rather than constituting, products of the forces that structure societal institutions” (Hekman 195), other feminists argue that this position denies women agency: the social constructionist perspective potentially “defines women as wholly passive, the dupe [sic] of social forces” (Hekman 196). However, as Hekman points out, in order to counter the deterministic social constructionist position, other feminists cling to “a quasi-essentialist notion of the subject,” by believing that there is some *a priori* or inner self or true self constrained by social forces. Hekman argues that a dichotomy does not really exist if one views the subject as a “discursive subject.” She explains:

The subject that emerges from this perspective is a heterogeneous subject. It is a subject that is a product of the fluctuating, changing and often conflictual historical and social influences that impinge on it. This subject is not without an identity, but identity is no longer conceived in even quasi-essentialist terms. Rather, it is an identity that is fluid, heterogeneous, changing. (Hekman 201)

The discursive subject is both constituted and constituting. While formed by social forces, the discursive subject still has agency because “agency is a product of discourse, a capacity that flows from discursive formations . . . subjects find agency within the discursive spaces open to them in their particular historical period” (Hekman 202). Approaching the subject from this perspective enables feminist critics to examine the construction of the feminine subject in a new light: while “constructed through the multiple discursive formations of a given culture,” the feminine subject may find agency in some of these discursive formations (Hekman 202). The constituted subject is also constituting because she creates herself from the discursive mix available to her: “in any given historical period,” Hekman writes, “discursive formations are multiple and heterogeneous. Even though in every era there will be hegemonic discourses, other nonhegemonic discourses will always exist, forming a discursive mix from which subjectivity can be constructed” (Hekman

203). From this discursive mix, the subject weaves together individual subjectivities, constructing a self that is individually distinctive, yet a product of social forces. One discursive space, one multiple discourse that presents potential subjectivities available to individuals, is literature. Readers may understand ways of being, methods of self-definition, acceptable behaviour, from literary texts. In adopting or adapting these various subjectivities, the reader establishes agency. Fictional heroines present a discursive position to a reader, an already-constructed mix of subjectivities which open up possibilities to the reader for occupying a similar space. Readers like Simone de Beauvoir, Joyce Carol Oates, and Cynthia Ozick have credited Little Women with providing inspiration to them in their own artistic ventures: they learned from Jo that being a writer is a possibility.⁵

The young heroines of the Bildungsroman themselves display agency in negotiating the discursive mix available to them. Therefore, the Bildungsroman is particularly important to scrutinize for its ideological content: in reading a story about a young person's adjustment to society, the reader may potentially form impressions about society's expectations of his or her own adjustment and socialization. What the heroines, and thus the readers, learn is negotiation and the ability to embrace social and ideological contradictions. Furthermore, the Bildungsroman is particularly intriguing because it is a novel of development, of becoming: it is a novel primarily about process. In locating the heroines' agency in their negotiations with their community, I am focusing on the process of their becoming, on the activity that forms their identity, as I will discuss in detail later on.

I have chosen Yonge's, Alcott's, and Montgomery's works because I regard all three as Bildungsromane. Even though The Daisy Chain chronicles the life of the May family, the novel is structured around Ethel's coming of age, beginning and ending with her as the central focus. While Little Women may also seem to be a family chronicle, arguably Jo is the central character and the other three girls are foils for her development.

Indeed, one could argue that Little Women is an amalgamation of four Bildungsromane: Meg's early coming of age through marriage, Beth's failed maturity, Jo's artistic emergence, and Amy's typical marriage to the hero. However, because Jo is the most endearing character, not to mention the girl readers primarily identify with, I will look at her development alone. Anne of Green Gables is the novel of the three which most clearly conforms to a Bildungsroman, because it tells the story of a single protagonist's development.

The male adolescent's story, the male Bildungsroman--variously understood as the novel of education, novel of development, apprenticeship novel, coming-of-age story, or the novel of adolescence⁶--has been studied extensively. Agreeing with almost all critics of this genre, Jerome Buckley in Seasons of Youth explains that the forerunner for the nineteenth-century English Bildungsroman was not the Romantic focus on the individual or the earlier English examples of the genre. Rather, Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (1794-96) arguably had the most influence, especially after Carlyle translated it into English as Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship in 1824. Many critics outline the typical elements of the genre, labeled simply the Bildungsroman, with the obvious assumption that the protagonists of such stories would invariably be male (although some critics like Susanne Howe give a nod to Jane Austen's female characters). Susanne Howe, in her 1930 study Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen, explains the traditional plot:

The adolescent hero of the typical "apprentice" novel sets out on his way through the world, meets with reverses usually due to his own temperament, falls in with various guides and counsellors, makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which he may work effectively. (Howe 4)

Buckley similarly explains what he perceives to be the traditional plot of the novel of education, while acknowledging that no single novel exactly follows the pattern:

A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city. There his real "education" begins. . . . By the time he had decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon maturity. (Buckley 17-18)

Traditionally, critics of the Bildungsroman like Howe and Buckley, focus on the patterns that define it, which is always a slippery exercise: every example of a Bildungsroman will prove an exception to the rule. What motivates the hero's character development is not a typical narrative pattern but the ability or desire of the hero to conform to social expectations. From my viewpoint, the most interesting similarity between these two critics' summaries is the hero's ultimate recognition that he has to adjust to, as Howe says, or accommodate, in Buckley's terms, the world around him. Randolph Shaffner discusses social adjustment in the male Bildungsroman, suggesting that the "novels of the later periods of the nineteenth century, while retaining the development of an individual as the object of fiction, have come to reveal instead 'an assimilation of the individual into the community' or at least into an attitude of social consciousness" (Shaffner 21). In Shaffner's view, the individual, rather than conflicting with, adjusts himself to, his community, and perhaps the opposite happens to a degree as well. The hero has to learn to find contentment within the boundaries set by his world. These are not novels of escape or transcendence, but novels of social and psychological adjustment. It is interesting that the

Bildungsroman is hardly ever triumphant or wholly happy at its conclusion. Rather, with the adjustment comes some kind of acknowledgment of what has been lost.

Feminists have pointed out that most critics of the Bildungsroman, like Howe and Buckley, rarely look at examples of this genre with a female hero. Neither Howe nor Buckley in their summaries seems to allow for a female protagonist because they both focus their attention on the pattern of the plot and not the thematics of the character's adjustment. Even with the acknowledgment that "he," for some writers, stands for both male and female, the pattern delineated by these two critics does not allow for the development evident in female Bildungsromane of the same period. Howe, like Buckley, claims that one has to leave home in order to grow up and develop: "After all--putting aside for a moment Miss Austen's Emma and a few other magnificent exceptions--no one can learn anything at home" (Howe 1). Many female characters of novels do not have the means or opportunity to leave home. This limitation does not mean that they learn nothing, or that their development is less significant than a male's.

Moreover, the two typical defining elements, the impression of choice for the hero and his potential for becoming a master of some sort (Shaffner 16), do not emerge in the female Bildungsroman. As Susan Fraiman points out:

The contemporaneous heroine's relation to choice, mentors, and mastery is rather different. Her finding of friends, her picking of work are both subsumed by the all-determining "choice" of a husband, and even this is a mostly negative prerogative. (Fraiman 5-6)

While Fraiman's assessment of the female novel of development is rather dismal, she recognizes that the over-arching patterns will not be the same as the male's: the heroine may not be able to go off into the world, she may not have the options a male hero has, and her ability to master her circumstances may seem less well-defined. However, she does develop and learn to accommodate the world around her, as does her male counterpart.

While critics of the male Bildungsroman have suggested, even if implicitly, that the hero is placed within constraints and must learn to accommodate his society, this pattern is more overt, as Fraiman suggests, in the female variant: because the heroine's choices are more limited and her position more circumscribed by her gender, her accommodation and adjustment are more often the primary focus of the narrative. Some feminist critics have not seen that this is the same developmental pattern, however foregrounded, which operates in the male variant. For example, Patricia Meyer Spacks asks, "Where is the female equivalent of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man?," to lament the lack of empowering stories of female adolescence (The Female Imagination 157). Spacks assumes that the hero of Portrait, Stephen Dedalus, is a powerful, successful character and that James Joyce celebrates male adolescence. One could, however, see Stephen as a failed artist and his story as ironic rather than celebratory. Many other critics who look at stories of adolescence assume that the male versions are more heroic and empowering for the protagonist than the female versions (see Segal for example). Often, books like Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn depict a hero who must accommodate himself to, or live on, the margins of society. Neither position is wholly satisfying or empowering for the hero. I will discuss the often-unresolved struggle between the individual and community in male Bildungsromane later.

Not only is accommodation an integral theme in the novel of adolescence but, as many critics in recent years have pointed out, the Bildungsroman is inherently contradictory. Some critics, like Franco Moretti, have seen the structure as contradictory: "dynamism and limits, restlessness and the 'sense of an ending': built as it is on sharp contrasts, the structure of the Bildungsroman will of necessity be intrinsically contradictory" (Moretti 6, original italics). Feminist critics, as I will point out, have explored the ideological rather than structural contradictions that riddle the female Bildungsroman, by suggesting that there are two levels to the text: by separating the text into two levels, these critics tend to privilege one narrative message over the other—the

surface one is perhaps more accessible, whereas the submerged one yields a more feminist sentiment. On the one hand, critics suggest, the authors purvey the message that submission is appropriate for a woman; yet, on the other, they also encode in their texts the notes of rebellion. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland suggest that “the tensions that shape female development may lead to a disjunction between a surface plot, which affirms social conventions, and a submerged plot, which encodes rebellion” (Abel, Hirsch and Langland 12). Similarly, Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström uses an anthropological model to discuss the dominant voice representing patriarchal culture and a muted voice representing women’s culture in the domestic fiction and Bildungsromane of Charlotte Yonge. Eve Kornfeld and Susan Jackson, calling the female Bildungsroman “utopian,” wrestle with the texts and “feminist subtexts,” concluding that generic and social expectations override any utopian impulse to depict a perfect world for women. Kornfeld’s and Jackson’s conclusion points to a common problem with their otherwise sophisticated examination of the texts: these critics want to resolve the contradiction between the polarities they have distinguished; they want to make an overarching conclusion in favour of one side of the contradiction. Instead, Kornfeld and Jackson might consider that the genre is not utopian in that it does not set out to present an ideal world, that a comfortable conclusion cannot be reached, and that, ultimately, we as critics have to learn to embrace and maintain the contradictions of the text. Indeed, the contradictions are overt. The rebellious aspect of the texts is not hidden nor is the conformist element dominant. Frances Armstrong acknowledges the polarity between “littleness, triviality, and women” and “bigness, greatness, and men” in Little Women: “Alcott’s most popular texts set littleness and greatness on a temporal continuum rather than in binary opposition” (Armstrong 454). Placed on a continuum rather than in an opposition, the contradictions, such as rebelliousness and conformity, continue to call each other into question.

Many critics have said that both male and female Bildungsromane focus on the protagonist’s compromise. However, discussing how the female Bildungsroman differs

from the male, Fraiman suggests that “to reinvent the genre around [the heroine rather than the hero] is to recognize a set of stories in which compromise and even coercion are more strongly thematized than choice” (Fraiman 6). Fraiman’s focus on compromise would be understood by Moretti, however, as a keynote of the genre in general and not a particular feature of the female version:

The enormous and unconscious collective enterprise of the Bildungsroman bears witness to a different solution [than synthesis or assimilation] to modern culture’s contradictory nature. Far less ambitious than synthesis, this other solution is compromise: which is also, not surprisingly, the novel’s most celebrated theme. (Moretti 9, original italics)

Moretti believes that the protagonist of a Bildungsroman, in order to be properly socialized, must “interiorize” the contradictions inherent in his or her world. “The next step,” he writes, “being not to ‘solve’ the contradiction, but rather to learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival” (Moretti 10). This “interiorizing” recalls Althusser’s perspective on the subject freely accepting his or her subjection—with one difference. Where the hailing of the subject by ideology for Althusser is in part a function of the repressive nature of the state, Moretti sees it as critical for individual adjustment. “The illusion of free consent,” Moretti suggests, “seems to be far more necessary for the survival of the individual than for that of the social system” (Moretti 68, original italics). Moretti’s comment again emphasizes the agency in interpellation. The individual is called to ideology and labours to make it coherent in order to survive within society.

The Bildungsroman, then, might be read as a story of adjustment, of psychological survival. The most heroic of protagonists might not be those who boast sensitive maladaptation—those characters who cannot conform to their societies’ dictates and understanding, such as Stephen Dedalus in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man--but those who skillfully manage to combine their own desires with the desires of their communities. Ethel, from The Daisy Chain, is forced to relinquish studying her brother’s lessons but still

manages to make education a focus of her identity by establishing a school for poor children, by teaching her younger brothers, and by continuing to read on her own. The successful young characters construct for themselves an identity that makes sense of the limitations on them: ultimately, these young characters create themselves. Pollyanna, limited by being poor, orphaned, and alone, plays the glad game in order to alleviate her grief. She actively constructs herself as the glad girl, establishing an acceptable identity for herself within her community. Many critics focus their attentions on the compromise or, as they pejoratively label it, “capitulation” of the young characters as they grow up.⁷ That young heroines seem to capitulate, however, is not the issue. Rather, the issue is what choices they have. What options, besides trying to adapt to their community, are available to the heroines, both in the world of the text and in readers’ expectations? While Moretti’s notion of compromise is effective for understanding the general dynamic driving the Bildungsroman, it also overlooks the active agency of the various heroes. If Ethel’s abandoning her own education to serve her family is seen only as compromise, her clever refusal to relinquish education completely is overshadowed. Compromise connotes that the situation is resolved, that the issue is settled once and for all. While the heroines do compromise, the activity that leads to a situation which is acceptable to both the girl and the community is where the heroine’s power lies.

Uncovering how the heroines actively negotiate, rather than compromise with, the various contradictory forces at work on them, recognizes the agency and power that these characters have. An examination of the heroine’s compromise focuses attention on her final situation, whereas an exploration of her negotiations shifts the attention to the process of her development. The heroine’s various strategies to conform to or rebel against community expectations constitute the content of the narrative and, the outcome does not necessarily negate all that has gone before. In narrative, any negotiation, rebellion, or resistance represented always remains encoded in the text, regardless of the ending. Furthermore, the Bildungsroman is about the process of the heroine’s development. By

the end of the novel, the heroine has established, rather than a fixed identity, her skill at negotiating: that negotiation itself is a process highlights the heroine's fluid and resilient identity. I define negotiation as the individual's ability to work the variety of subject positions and the contradictory ideology to her or his benefit. I recognize that negotiation is often interpreted as a business exchange between two equal partners. In this case, I define it as a strategy of the relatively powerless to mediate between conflicting demands and ideology.

The heroines' negotiations show a capacity to embrace contradiction without trying to reconcile it. The characters' agency lies in maintaining the contradictions. In so doing, the characters allow for themselves multiple sites where identity can be constructed: Jo can be 'father' to her sisters and loving daughter to her father; Ethel can appear to be unambitious while scheming to single-handedly transform a beleaguered village; Anne can exaggerate her status as lonely, unwanted orphan in elaborate apologies, yet still be part of Green Gables. Negotiating the contradictions is like having cake and eating it: each heroine may occasionally seem properly subdued; yet, she also manages to retain an identity which, at first, did not meet with approbation from her community. Pollyanna, for example, is apparently only glad--the only acceptable response in the eyes of her community--yet she also manages to exact sympathy for her unhappiness in the very moments she explains her gladness. A fundamental irony underlies negotiation, as well, since the negotiator can destabilize a fixed identity: the heroine may occasionally, when coerced, act in accordance with someone else's wishes--like Jo presenting herself as the charming girl while visiting--while managing to indicate her dissatisfaction with this role--as Jo does by over-acting Amy's directions. As I am defining it, negotiation is, however, the agency of the relatively powerless. Because these heroines cannot separate from their communities and because their communities impose a tremendous number of constraints, their only choice is to negotiate, to anticipate and disarm. The protagonists do what Moretti suggests is necessary: they do not resolve or reconcile contradiction. Instead, through negotiation, they keep the

contradictions active and operative, and, by doing so, they maintain more options for themselves. Instead of alienating themselves from their communities, like Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss, thereby rendering themselves outcasts with little means for survival, the heroines of girls' stories negotiate for acceptance. The truly successful and powerful heroines of the female Bildungsroman learn to live with contradiction. Male protagonists do not seem to negotiate as successfully.

A brief examination of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Great Expectations and Huckleberry Finn shows that neither Stephen, Pip, nor Huck experiences escape, triumph, or even mastery, yet all three novels can be viewed as typical examples of the male Bildungsroman. I have chosen these three texts for various reasons. Portrait is considered to be the finest twentieth-century example of the Bildungsroman, possibly the best in English. Charles Dickens' novel is a frequently-cited nineteenth-century example. I have included Huckleberry Finn as a boy's story which might be more equivalent to the girls' stories in my study because it was written for children. What seems to set the male Bildungsroman apart from its female counterpart is the hero's inability to adapt to his circumstances: girls need to conform more than do boys because their options are more limited. Moreover, when the hero does successfully adjust to his community, as does Pip in Great Expectations, the tone of the novel is more tragic than celebratory, conveying the ideological message that heroic men do not accommodate to their circumstances. Where female protagonists learn to negotiate for acceptance within their community, some male heroes have the luxury of rejecting community altogether.

In all three novels, the hero is set off from his immediate community by his sensitivity or yearnings, a feature typical of the Bildungsroman. Each hero recognizes his place in the world and the limitations of this position. Stephen Dedalus realizes that his position is tied to his father's economic class. At Clongowes, young Stephen thinks about his father: "He felt sorry for him [his father] that he was not a magistrate like the other boys' fathers. Then why was he sent to that place with them?" (Joyce 26). Stephen is an

outsider at his boarding school because of his father's class status. Similarly, Pip, from Great Expectations, upon being introduced to the world of Miss Havisham and the beautiful Estella, grows "ashamed of home" where he becomes apprenticed to his brother-in-law, a blacksmith (Dickens 134). He describes the world that is his birthright as "coarse and common, and I would not have Miss Havisham and Estella see it on any account" (Dickens 134). Pip yearns for the life of a gentleman rather than the conditions he inherits. On the other hand, Huckleberry Finn finds the life of a civilized boy difficult to bear. When his alcoholic and abusive father abducts him from his guardian, the Widow, and brings him back to uncivilized living, Huck finds this alternative unsatisfactory as well. He wants neither the well-meaning rules and regulations of the two women who are raising him nor the physical and emotional abuse he receives from his father.

Each protagonist of the male Bildungsroman wishes to transcend his limited position. Stephen initially finds he can achieve a sense of empowerment with the money he receives for essay-writing; however, he finds that this short-term gratification is empty and useless (Joyce 98). Ultimately, he wants to escape the downward spiral of his father and his homeland: he moves from school, to the Church, to university with very little change in his character. Pip, more obviously than Stephen, receives the financial means from an unknown benefactor to leave his home. He becomes the gentleman he wanted to be, but does not achieve happiness. Unlike the other two, Huckleberry Finn must rely on himself for means of escape. He fakes his own death and takes off down the Mississippi River with Jim, a runaway slave.

Of the three characters, Pip is the only one who seems to achieve any peace or happiness. Portrait ends with Stephen about to leave home. His mother hopes that he "may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels" (Joyce 252-53). The reader suspects that character development is only now about to begin, if it will happen at all. Indeed, while Stephen's story is supposedly about the developing artist, the reader has yet to witness Stephen's art beyond one poem and his

diary at the end. A question is left, then, about the extent to which Stephen becomes a successful artist, or even a successful adult. Like Stephen, Huckleberry Finn is poised to move on at the end of the novel. He can stay at Tom's Aunt Sally's as long as he likes; but, even with all the narrative conflicts in the novel resolved--his father is dead, his fortune remains intact, Jim has his freedom--Huck is unwilling to settle down. His escape has turned into a way of life rather than a means to survive an abusive situation. The reader is left with the impression that Huck will continue running, always on the margins of society, and will never be fully accepted because he cannot adjust to the world around him, even when it seems pleasant. Pip, on the other hand, settles his debts, becomes a clerk and works his way up to gentleman status by merit. He accommodates his situation and succeeds. He also seems to "get the girl" in the end, as he and Estella are reconciled, although the novel leaves that issue unresolved.

Pip is the only hero in these three novels who adjusts to the situation presented to him. With a taste of the life for which he yearns, he sets out to achieve it by merit. The other two characters do not develop or alter themselves for their situation: Stephen seems just the same sensitive child as he started out, unable to fit in anywhere, and Huck continues to run from community. Great Expectations, however, has an air of tragedy: the Pip who reaches success through his own means is a more subdued and weary character than the one who began the novel, suggested by the final scene significantly set among the ruins of Miss Havisham's old home. Ultimately, all these stories are about the hero's ability or, more appropriately, inability to adapt to the world around him.

Many feminist critics of the female Bildungsroman believe, with Spacks, that the girl's coming-of-age story is more problematic than the boy's: it does not seem to follow the generic patterns set by the male version. Elizabeth Segal writes that "the boys' book, even when entertaining and escapist, was essentially a Bildungsroman; a chronicle of growth to manhood. The approved girls' book depicted a curbing of autonomy in adolescence." Segal does not feel that the female variant is a Bildungsroman at all (Segal

174). Laura Sue Fuderer, in her annotated bibliography of the female Bildungsroman, identifies a theoretical debate about “whether the female Bildungsroman as a genre is a revision, a variant, a subgenre, an expansion, or an impossibility” (Fuderer 6). Summing up the focus of this debate, Fraiman entitles the first chapter of Unbecoming Women, “Is There a Female Bildungsroman?” Because of the constricted roles women were expected to play as they came of age, many critics see the Bildungsroman as an impossibility for women: a girl does not fully mature into adulthood but is, instead, harnessed by social convention. Katherine Dalsimer suggests that literature has “insistently emphasized the problematic nature of ending adolescence, when [the girl] must confront the restrictions upon what she, as a woman, may become” (Dalsimer 140). Ester Kleinbord Labovitz has argued that the female Bildungsroman did not exist before the twentieth century, implicitly dismissing such important nineteenth-century texts as Jane Eyre and The Mill on the Floss, as well as Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, which Moretti upholds along with Goethe’s The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister as one of the originators and classic examples of the genre. These critics believe that the female Bildungsroman is an impossibility because they themselves have accepted the generic definitions set by critics who treat texts with primarily male heroes.

Other feminist critics have argued that the female Bildungsroman does exist, but has a kind of inverted pattern. Most often quoted is Annis Pratt who has argued that the female novel of development shows the young woman “grow[ing] down rather than up” (Pratt 168). The heroines’ powerlessness continually disrupts their psychological and social development, claims Pratt. By focusing only on the societal forces that require submission as the girl enters adulthood, these critics ignore the many ways that young heroines have negotiated in order to adjust to their communities, while still retaining a unique sense of identity.

More specifically, critics such as Elaine Hoffman Baruch, Patricia Spacks, and Linda Huf have argued that the female Bildungsroman does not adequately represent female

selfhood because the heroines, typically rebellious and spirited, capitulate to patriarchal pressures by the end of the novel (Segal 174 for example). The most significant emblem of capitulation for these critics is the marriage of the young heroine. Baruch agrees that “the authentic feminine Bildungsroman is still to be written” because, as she sees it, most of the female examples of this genre take place around marriage (Baruch 357; 335). The heroine, Baruch believes, is educated to be married and then educated or “finished” through marriage. Spacks also implies that the marriages are suspect: “The atmosphere of compromise surrounding these marriages in novels of female experience suggests . . . comparable doubts about the relations between female existence and self-fulfillment. Adolescent girls must grow up or die; both fates have dark and bright aspects” (The Adolescent Idea, 198). Huf is more direct in her treatment of the specific subgenre, the female Kunstlerroman, or portrait of the artist, when she writes with conviction: “Wedlock is padlock” (Huf 159). Huf regards marriage in the female Kunstlerroman as something to avoid at all costs. Again, however, by dismissing the heroine’s marriage as only problematic, these critics refuse to see how the characters have successfully or unsuccessfully negotiated social expectations. Since marriage seems to be their only option, who have they selected and why? What other options, besides marriage, are presented in the narrative and how are they presented? Why do readers often desire the heroine’s union with a perfect (for her) man? These are all questions that could help critics to understand, rather than condemn, the heroine’s attempt at adjustment. Answers to these questions would also reveal the ideological workings of the text by exposing not only assumptions which might be naturalized by the narrative (the heroine must marry, for example) but also contradictions (the heroine’s distaste for marriage).⁸

Contrary to these critics, I believe that there is a female Bildungsroman and that it offers its characters and its readers the possibility for agency and empowerment. The male Bildungsromane that I examined did not present a particularly liberating world for men and boys: with the exception of the tragi-comic Pip, the boys did not emotionally develop or

grow more mature. While girls' and women's social and material conditions have not been ideal, while their options and their ability to exercise control even over their own circumscribed lives have been limited, the heroines of these stories manage to grow, to develop, to fit in to their communities, to establish a sense of identity, to find niches, to fully explore their options. Their creative solutions to the dilemmas of everyday life--Anne proclaiming patriotism as her reason for wanting to perform, against Marilla's will, in the school pageant, for example--are their strength. That the heroines learn to negotiate, manage to have their cake and eat it too, means that the reader learns about this valuable skill. Not only does the female Bildungsroman exist, but it is a pragmatic tool for passing on valuable survival skills from generation to generation.

Working from the assumption, then, that the reader can potentially recognize a subject position in the Bildungsroman from which to learn a particular world view, I will examine, in the following chapters, the construction of the female subject in The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables. In my first chapter, I will look at the ideology in the construction of the texts themselves. Each author, through intertextuality and metafiction, negotiates traditional genres and plot lines in order to present her heroine with as great a 'discursive mix' as possible. Yonge's novel allows Ethel to develop her ambition within a rather limited sphere, whereas both Alcott's and Montgomery's novels, working from the tradition that Yonge began, can allow for increasingly greater successes for their heroines in more areas. Isolating three seemingly conflicting plot lines of romantic love, domestic duty, and personal ambition, I argue that Ethel has to relinquish hope for love in favour of duty to her father; however, she can maintain a revised ambition. Jo accepts her duty, receives love, and, like Ethel, accepts a muted ambition. Anne manages success in all three areas: while her duty to Marilla seems to interfere with her ambitions, she gains romantic love and refuses to relinquish her ambition. Montgomery's text intertwines the three plot lines in such a way as to diminish the conflict between them.

My second chapter examines the female subject as she is contained in the family circle, a relationship that is both nurturing and constricting. After examining three canonical works by women in which the heroine alienates herself from her community and ultimately dies, I will suggest that Ethel, Jo, and Anne survive because they learn to accommodate their communities. Their survival is not effortless but a result of a complex negotiation of contradictory family politics. Each novel shows the constructed nature of the family by exposing the politics of exclusion--based on race, nationality, kinship and class--that is necessary to maintaining the tightknit bond. Moreover, while the novels seem to valorize family life, they also reveal oppressive and frightening aspects of the family--the tyranny of patriarchy, the potential for violence and destruction, and the vulnerability of children, for example. The heroines' success in negotiating for acceptance with parental figures who are at once nurturing and oppressively powerful underscores their agency.

My third chapter examines, specifically, the female subject who is constructed by the generic demands of the text (chapter one) and by social pressures within the text (chapter two). Each novel provides examples of femininity with which to contrast the heroine. The heroine's inability and lack of desire to style herself after the other women in her life shows the constructed nature of femininity and the heroine's agency in creating herself. Moreover, I will show that, through negotiating with the expectations placed on her, the heroine achieves acceptance for her troublesome femininity: thus, she both presents a new discursive subjectivity to the reader and indicates that acceptance is always possible. Rather than agree with critics who assume that the heroines grow more passive and submissive, I will show that the heroines' "natures"--the subjectivity they prefer--are not relinquished over the course of the novels. Instead, the heroines establish an effect of a coherent identity that retains their troublesomeness, even if they adapt themselves to their communities for a greater degree of acceptance.

Finally, in my conclusion, I will provide readings of the sequels. While the heroines recede as characters and in personality in the later texts, the contradictory quality

of the earlier novels remains. The happy messages of fulfilled and submissive womanhood are countered by tales of abuse of and empowerment for women. Even while the protagonist diminishes as the point of interest of the novel, her voice is established through other means: Ethel becomes equated with patriarchal authority; Jo becomes her own narrator; and Anne, while the most disappointing of the three, establishes herself as a successful writer, mother, and wife. For all of the characters, the continued establishment of their voice in a narrative tradition which does not value the stories of older or single women is a success and a negotiation all its own: typically, the story of a young woman ends with her wedding. Here again, as I suggested in chapter one, the generic conventions which carry a powerful ideological message are not upheld. The story continues after it is usually over, conveying the message that these women are still important.

I conclude by suggesting that the negotiation that the writers depict operates to educate readers about potential subjectivities which they can adopt or adapt. That the girls manage to negotiate expectations, survive, and establish a strong sense of identity for themselves not only creates a new subject position for readers to add to the “discursive mix” available to them, but also sends a powerful message to readers: negotiation and change are always possible. Moreover, I overstep the lines of the ‘intentional fallacy’ in chapter one to argue that each author was aware of the potential for reader identification with her heroine. Thus, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery all wrote strategically in order to educate their readers, in order to share the survival strategy of negotiation. In a sense, these three writers played a glad game all their own, writing happy stories which still focused attention on the difficulties and injustices confronting the young woman.

¹ For example, Humphrey Carpenter rather scornfully dismisses books--like Anne of Green Gables, whose heroines display “an aggressive femininity”-- which he labels the “‘Pollyanna’ or ‘glad girl’ school of writing, featuring girls of unbearable cheerfulness” (Carpenter 98).

² I define a girls’ story as a story written about girls as central characters and intended primarily, although not necessarily exclusively, for a young female audience.

³ While I will focus on the critics who read Althusser’s theory as providing agency for the subject, some critics have seen his work as problematic in this respect: my exploration of Althusser would be lacking if I did not acknowledge this other reading. In addition to Teresa de Lauretis’s criticisms of Althusser, Rosemary Hennessey mentions that Althusser’s concept of interpellation has been criticised because it “has made theorizing subversive agency difficult” (Hennessey 23). Likewise, Graeme Turner suggests that Althusser’s theory “implies that cultural change is almost impossible and ideological struggle futile” (Turner 29). Demonstrating how Althusser is traditionally read, Dan Latimer suggests that Althusser’s emphasis on “the passivity of the subject” classifies him as a structuralist (Latimer 60).

⁴ de Lauretis encounters problems when she further criticizes Althusser’s suggestion that there is no outside to ideology. She believes that the subject emerging in contemporary feminism is both inside and outside ideology, by making herself “conscious of being so” (de Lauretis 10). However, that “consciousness” is again an imaginary representation of the individual’s relation to her real conditions of existence. Moreover, as de Lauretis finally admits, feminism itself is not outside ideology. Indeed, it is just as much an ideological position as any other.

⁵ In Sister’s Choice, Elaine Showalter refers to the influence Little Women has had on Simone de Beauvoir, Joyce Carol Oates, and Cynthia Ozick. Christian McEwen’s

anthology of prose fiction about tomboys, Jo's Girls, suggests the influence Jo has had on generations of readers who became writers.

⁶ Many critics make distinctions between the various names. Spacks discusses the novel of adolescence. Buckley, Howe, and Shaffner refer to apprenticeship novels. Annis Pratt believes that the female variant is an Entwicklungsroman, or a novel of mere growing up but not of development (Pratt 36): the Entwicklungsroman is, however, as Buckley points out, a subgenre of the Bildungsroman. I believe that novels about young persons growing up can almost always be classified as Bildungsromane, whether it falls into one of the subgenres, is labeled an anti-Bildungsroman, or is considered by critics to be a failure. I will not, therefore, make fine distinctions between the various English names assigned to the genre. Instead I will use them interchangeably, always with the assumption that they signify the Bildungsroman.

⁷ Patricia Spacks, while ostensibly arguing that women writers “depict girls who understand their subordinate place but also understand how to exploit its hidden opportunities” (The Female Imagination 113), conveys the overarching message that “[t]he process of growing up, for a girl, is one of being curbed and tamed: of losing power” (130). Female Bildungsromane present “constant images of challenge aborted or safely confined,” she concludes (158). See also Annis Pratt and Elizabeth Segal.

⁸ Jane Austen’s Emma, for example, presents a young woman unconcerned with her own romantic affairs, not needing to get married for money or companionship. Because the entire novel traces courtship after courtship, however, the narrative assumption is that all young women, Emma included, will marry: marriage is an unquestioned natural and expected state, a message somewhat belied by the presence of the spinster, Miss Bates.

Chapter One

Love, Duty, Ambition:

Negotiating Genre

. . . [M]en were supposed to be able to go out and take on all kinds of experiences and shuck off what they didn't want and come back proud. Without even thinking about it, I had decided to do the same.

--Alice Munro

In Alice Munro's Bildungsroman, Lives of Girls and Women (1971), the young protagonist, Del Jordan, resists the popular belief that being female makes one "damageable" (Munro 147). While Del defiantly decides she will follow a typically male pattern of behaviour, she eventually faces conflict between her fledging but promising academic career, a love affair with Garnet French, and her mixed emotions towards her mother. Del's conflict results in a minor annihilation: she does not receive a scholarship, she rejects an offer of marriage, and she leaves home. Lives of Girls and Women presents Del with more choices--she can reject everything--than nineteenth-century texts can offer their heroines; however, the central conflicts remain surprisingly similar.

As the young heroine of the nineteenth-century Bildungsroman comes of age, she faces choices between family duty, romantic love, and personal ambition, much as Del Jordan does. These choices are not always mutually exclusive, but often present a conflict for the protagonist of a Bildungsroman. The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables work from a developing tradition: each author in turn creates greater options for her heroine. Where Ethel accepts family duty and a toned-down ambition over a romantic relationship, Jo negotiates for an atypical partnership and

altered ambitions instead of family duty, and Anne embraces duty and a re-visioned ambition, receiving as well an unsought potential romantic interest. Through self-reflexivity and metafictional elements in their novels, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery clearly establish how they are rewriting traditional literary scripts. In doing so, they assert their own agency and convey a double message to their readers: not only the heroines negotiate the contradiction between family duty, personal ambition, and romantic love, but also the authors themselves are negotiating the conflicts inherent in the female Bildungsroman by both accommodating and overturning literary convention. Each author makes clear how she is re-working a tradition that presents young women with confusing contradictions.

The contradictions manifest in the female Bildungsroman stem from the author's handling of the plot. While most novels concerned with young ladies' development focus on their path to marriage, this plot line would seem to conflict with the development of the young woman into a personally fulfilled individual, according to some critics (see DuPlessis for example). The novel then becomes more about love than about quest. For some heroines, like Ethel from The Daisy Chain who refuses to leave her father, or Emma from Jane Austen's Emma who also insists on remaining in her home, family duty poses a crisis to both personal ambition and marriage. Whatever the decisions of the young woman, whatever resolution to the conflict, ideology is conveyed to the reader: women should stay with their families, women should marry, women should not pursue education, women can have personal ambition if they do not neglect domestic and romantic identities, for a few examples.

While Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery present their heroines with conflicting plots focused on romance, duty, and ambition, they first re-write traditional stories and display a self-reflexivity in their novels. In so doing, they highlight the fictionality of their work and stress how texts influence people and other texts. In their rewriting of previous stories, the authors demonstrate that ideology, literary conventions, and

tradition, while necessarily lifted from previous scripts, are not reconstituted unchanged: there is a space for negotiating the texts handed down. They may present traditional plot lines, but these writers draw attention to where they deviate from them: they negotiate for new scripts, as do their heroines. As well, the texts' self-referential moments convey the idea that everyday life cannot match up to imaginative, fictive life: for example, heterosexual romance may be foregrounded in romance novels but may not be an option in an ordinary girl's life, such as Ethel's: she relinquishes romantic love for filial love.¹ The self-reflexive statements in the novels blur the line between everyday life and fiction, demystifying both and firmly establishing the domestic sphere as worthy of being recorded in fiction. On one hand, everyday life becomes more romantic and the stuff of fiction. On the other, romance and fiction become more grounded in the everyday. Moreover, the self-reflexivity, the blurring of romance and everyday life, suggests each author's agency in revising their inherited cultural scripts: Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery *intended* to expose their readers to a story that differs from tradition.

By using the word "intended," I seem to present a theoretical conundrum. Because I have accepted poststructuralist assumptions that identity is not fixed but fluid, that the discursive act constructs the subject/reader/author, that there is no *a priori* self, I seem to be undermining my own theoretical viewpoint in positing that these three authors intended to convey a certain message: this assumption would presume an author before the text. Stanley Fish's understanding of intentionality is helpful for demonstrating that this line of argument does not present my work with an overwhelming contradiction. Fish explains that we cannot interpret without positing an intending subject, an intentional being who has a message to convey:

The crucial point is that one cannot read *or* reread independently of intention, independently, that is, of the assumption that one is dealing with marks or sounds produced by an intentional being, a being situated in some enterprise in

relation to which he has a purpose or a point of view. (Doing What Comes Naturally 99-100)

Fish suggests that we cannot interpret meaning if we do not assume an intending subject who has produced the utterance. However, this position does not suggest that interpretation locates and fixes intention once and for all. Rather, intention can be re-interpreted and re-formulated: intention is constructed by the interpretation:

This, of course, does not mean that intention anchors interpretation in the sense that it stands outside and guides the process; intention like anything else is an interpretive fact; this is, it must be construed; it is just that it is impossible *not* to construe it and therefore impossible to oppose it either to the production or the determination of meaning. (Doing What Comes Naturally 100)

Fish's understanding of intentionality, then, rather than conflicting with my theoretical perspective, actually maintains my point. Like my understanding of the construction of the subject--the continual need to repeat oneself and the endless possibilities for agency in this constant rearticulation--intention is always constructed, always rearticulated, and thus always open for reinterpretation: "Rather than being a stable center of authority and control, the intending self is the continual creation and re-creation of the interpretations it itself performs in relation to its own actions, including the action of intending" (There's no such thing 183). Authorial intention, then, does not necessarily exist before interpretation, but interpretation, to be interpretation, must posit an intending subject; therefore, intention, while also separate, is constructed by interpretation and is always open to re-interpretation. When discussing whether a critic is stuck in his or her own "horizon of understanding," Fish points out that our own perspective "is itself an *engine* of change, a complex mechanism whose every exertion is simultaneously a self-alteration. If we understand criticism as the possibility of correction and reform (a word that should be read with a literal emphasis), then it [change] is a possibility that can never be foreclosed" (There's no such thing 189).

Constructing authorial intention, as I will do, is an act of interpretation which I believe is liberatory in the context of these girls' stories: the reader's construction of authorial intent highlights the agency of these women writers.

In order to read these three girls' stories as I have, I have had to posit intending authors. My interpretation, in part, constructs intent, not in a positivistic way, however, because, as Fish points out, the intending self often does not know exactly what it intends. Intention requires interpretation: it is not something known before the utterance, and the utterance always needs interpretation to be understood. I am not arguing that Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery intended to weave ideological contradictions throughout their texts, for example. They do locate their female protagonists at the junctures of contradictory generic conventions, however: their texts employ and overturn traditional genres in order to create opportunity and agency for the heroines.

Furthermore, the three novels show an awareness of the influential possibilities of literature, suggesting that the authors recognized the potential power of their own work. In each novel, reading educates the characters. In The Daisy Chain, Ethel learns from a book how to raise the funds for a church in a poor village:

She had heard in books, of girls writing poetry, romance, history--gaining fifties and hundreds.... She would compose, publish, earn money--some day call papa, show him her hoard, beg him to take it, and, never owning from whence it came, raise the building. (Yonge DC 22-23)

Meta Rivers, from the same novel, identifies with the heroine of a Sunday school story, Faithful Little Girl, in her zeal to become a missionary (Yonge DC 251-52). Alcott also shows the influence of literature over her characters. The March girls "play pilgrims" based on their reading of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, and they understand many of the events in their lives through an analogy with Bunyan's story: Jo's Apollyon, Meg's Vanity Fair, Beth's Palace Beautiful, and Amy's Valley of Humiliation, for example.

The girls are also influenced by Dickens' The Pickwick Papers, and form the Pickwick Club where they all adopt personae from this novel (Alcott 100). Jo March is motivated to write her first sensation story after she reads such a tale by Mrs. S.L.A.N.G. Northbury, a fictional and wealthy authoress (Alcott 267). Montgomery's heroine, Anne, is so influenced by the literature she reads that she attempts to re-enact Elaine's dying trip to Camelot from Tennyson's Idylls of the King, with disastrous results. Anne's reading has obviously been extensive and infiltrates her everyday life. She exploits her romance reading for her own self-expression: "My life is a perfect graveyard of buried hopes," she says to Marilla. "That's a sentence I read in a book once, and I say it over to comfort myself whenever I'm disappointed in anything" (Montgomery AGG 37). This sentence becomes a clever way for Anne to articulate her own despair without needing to take authorial responsibility for the words. The novels show that literature shapes the reader's understanding of him- or herself; they thereby suggest that the authors were aware of the didactic impact of their own texts.

Self-reflexivity and self-empowerment

The novels by Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery offer, through their self-reflexivity and self-consciousness, an intentional re-writing of traditional genres and conventions. The Daisy Chain employs such genres as the mission story, the sea tale, the traditional romance, and the story of accomplishment in order to indicate how this novel differs from other stories. A mission story emerges in the novel as Meta Rivers listens hungrily to Ethel's explanation of her uncle's life in New Zealand. Meta longs to be a missionary herself and tells Ethel that she feels like Lucilla in Faithful Little Girl, a Sunday School book (Yonge 252). Lucilla, it turns out, wished to be a boy so she could be a missionary. Of course, in The Daisy Chain, Meta becomes a missionary after all, moving to New Zealand with her new husband, Norman May. Unlike Lucilla in the story, Meta wishes for mission work not because she is "cross at home" but

because she wants to be useful and purposeful. She is guided by a sense of charity, not the desire to escape the constraints of social pressure at home.

During a picnic at Roman ruins, the characters of The Daisy Chain engage in “the story play”: each participant tells a story, incorporating a common word which one person has to guess. Yonge uses this game to show the self-referential nature of her own work by having each story-teller expose, in a slice of his or her own history, how each character understands the word “glory.” Yonge, furthermore, rewrites the characters’ stories with her own version, stressing by this “playfulness” where her novel alters tradition. Flora tells a story of female accomplishment: a young woman climbs Mont Blanc and achieves fame. Yonge exposes this sense of glory for glory’s sake as an empty victory, by having Flora pay dearly, with the life of her child, for attempting a similar if more everyday accomplishment, achieving fame and glory through her husband’s work.

Harry next tells a short sea story, in which a monkey imitates the greedy behaviour of the captain of the ship. As part of the story, Harry imitates the monkey imitating the captain, putting himself in the monkey’s role. Tellingly, while the Alcestis’s Captain proves to be a cold, heartless man, Harry defends him adamantly, even after the ship is destroyed killing Alan Ernescliffe. The captain of Harry’s story, and the monkey, glory over the booty from their travels. Perhaps Yonge wishes the reader to question both Harry’s rigorous fidelity to the staid captain and the treasure-gaining nature of the voyages. Yonge’s version of the tale differs from Harry’s: the ship’s quest resulted in shipwreck and failure, not glory or material gain. She re-writes the traditional story in her own novel.

In Ethel’s romance, several kings battle to prove themselves worthy of a beautiful damsel, Gloria. One good king refused to fight the others and instead performed good works and lived patiently. When another king fights him, the good king does not have the strength or skill to retaliate, and dies, but not before Gloria

declares him the winner. He too realizes his victory as he is on his way to God. The story comes from an old French book, and Flora points out that Ethel has altered the ending. The king, of course, represents Ethel, as she is named after a king. The sacrifice is all-important to Ethel, and, indeed, Yonge shows Ethel sacrificing herself to family duty at the end of The Daisy Chain and trying to rest content in the sacrifice by turning to the glory of God, like the slain king. In her story, Ethel does what Charlotte Yonge does in The Daisy Chain, alter the ending of a traditional romance.

Finally, Dr. May tells an animal fable/religious allegory about a hummingbird who felt useless. The bird did not realize that its master created it to be beautiful and bring glory to him simply by its very presence. This story is directed to Meta, the character who must guess the common word and who has felt oppressed by her wealth and lack of usefulness. Dr. May is attempting to tell her that beauty is her value and that she should perhaps rest content with her life as it is. Meta shows him differently, as she proves herself strong and worthy enough in spirit to leave her luxurious life to become a missionary in the colonies. Again, Yonge rewrites Dr. May's animal fable by allowing Meta a purpose beyond merely being beautiful.

Self-reflexive comments in the body of the text also highlight the fictionality of the work and emphasize the literary conventions with which Yonge is working. Particularly by blurring the lines between fiction and reality, Yonge shows how she alters the cultural scripts she has inherited. The self-reflexive moments are often ironic because the characters refer to themselves as being like characters in a novel and, in fact, they are. The irony heightens the reader's understanding of the literary conventions employed and the expectations these conventions carry. Yonge continually overturns the expectations she sets up, offering the message that real life never follows a typical fictional pattern. One example of self-referential writing occurs when Margaret and Alan Ernescliffe try to determine whether they should be engaged: "Ethel had a happy conviction that this was only the second volume of the novel" (Yonge

271). Yonge shows this hope to be ill-founded as the pair are destined never to be together. Once again, The Daisy Chain overturns the expectations it set up.

Ethel herself is influenced by and associated with romance, even though she does not have a romantic alliance in the novel. Through Ethel's focus on fantasies gleaned from romance novels, Yonge exposes the wide gap between everyday life and romance fiction: "Ethel had to go down to breakfast with a mind floating between romance, sorrow, and high aspirations, very unlike the actual world she had to live in" (Yonge 57). The last statement smacks of irony as Ethel is the heroine of a novel containing heterosexual romance, sorrow, and high aspirations. The subtitle of The Daisy Chain is Aspirations, for example. However, Yonge makes the point that daily life does not often match up to romance fiction; yet, at the same time, daily life is often more exciting than the characters believe and is, indeed, the stuff of fiction.

Like a hall of mirrors where one can see one's reflection repeated ever smaller and smaller, Ethel wants to write fiction because she reads of girls writing fiction:

She had read in books, of girls writing poetry, romance, history--gaining fifties and hundreds. Could not some of the myriads of fancies floating in her mind thus be made available? She would compose, publish, earn money--some day call papa, show him her hoard, beg him to take it, and, never owning whence it came, raise the building [church for Cocks Moor]. (Yonge 22-23)

Ethel's desire to write is not for the sake of fame or fortune for herself, but for the greater purpose of establishing a church at Cocks Moor. What Ethel would choose to write, however, is a romance for a Christian purpose, very much like Yonge's project. Ethel obviously has quite a store of romance fantasies to work from: "To earn money by writing was her favourite plan, and she called her various romances in turn before her memory, to judge which might be brought down to sober pen and ink" (Yonge 55). Through the self-reflexive and metafictional dimensions of her novel, Yonge exposes family life--not usually the stuff of exciting fiction--as romantic and adventurous. The

domestic sphere contains the same excitement as grander stories, like sea tales or stories of accomplishment.

Alcott also rewrites old stories and employs self-reflexive writing to emphasize the conventions she uses. Susan Naomi Bernstein comments on Alcott's strategies: "Louisa May Alcott demonstrates how woman, though labouring under the constraints of convention, can indeed help to transform herself, and, inevitably, her society" (Bernstein 41). Humphrey Carpenter has argued that The Daisy Chain was a source for Alcott's Little Women (Carpenter 94). Certainly, Alcott uses the same style and devices as Yonge, and Jo is found weeping over The Heir of Redclyffe, Yonge's most popular novel. Both Yonge and Alcott present a family struggling through a difficult time with a parent missing. Religious beliefs and acts of charity are a central focus in each work. The families in both novels are named after the months May and March. The name "Daisy" refers to the youngest May child, in addition to being their father's pet name for them all, and also makes its way into Little Women as Meg's nickname and her daughter's name. The heroines, Ethel and Jo, are similar ages and share physical characteristics. Finally, Ethel and Jo share the conviction that their duty is to their families, especially after their sisters' deaths. The similarities are numerous and intriguing, but most fascinating is how Alcott chose to rewrite Yonge's tale. Jo finds a partner and begins her own family circle instead of sacrificing herself to her father and siblings, as Ethel did.

Alcott also uses conventions gleaned from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.² Many of her chapter titles are taken from Bunyan's allegory. The narrative often focuses on the girls' attempts to be like Christian and plod on through life in order to reach the 'desired country.' Linda K. Kerber suggests that the use of Bunyan in Little Women is oppressive to the girls: "They do not find in their Puritan heritage that they need to seize their day, to make America their own, to connect themselves to the destiny which is manifest, to the American dream. Instead they find ever repeated images of

restraint, resignation and endurance” (Kerber 166). Bunyan’s text may convey a message of complacency and submission to one’s circumstance; however, Alcott’s use of it might have something of an ironic twinkle. Rather than show the serious and steady Christian overcoming obstacles, Alcott presents us with four very imperfect and human girls whose attempts to overcome similar obstacles--Vanity Fair, Valley of Humiliation, the Slough of Despond--are sources of gentle humour. Their attempts to conquer their perceived flaws are often failures, yet Alcott deals gently with them, allowing Amy to learn at home after she’s been punished at school, for example, and not punishing Meg for giving in to frivolity at her Vanity Fair--a weekend party at a wealthy friend’s house rather than an elaborate and decadent fair in a town called Vanity. Christian’s obstacles are translated into a more everyday context in Alcott’s text. Alcott diverges from Bunyan’s conventions by both making her situation very ordinary for young girls and having them often succumb to the temptations presented them. In doing so, Alcott shows her own agency in recreating the cultural scripts she has inherited.

Alcott’s characters, like Yonge’s, tell stories in a game in which one character takes up the story where the other has left off. The characters’ game is ultimately the author’s self-conscious playfulness as she shows a host of available genres and overturns the expectations of each by having another character pick up the story with a new genre. Brooke, Laurie’s tutor, begins by telling a story close to his heart in the style of a medieval romance about a young knight wishing to save several captive princesses. The visiting British girl picks up the tale in the style of a nineteenth-century French novel. Ned, her brother, continues with the form of a picaresque novel. Meg next takes the story to gothic romance or sensation story proportions while Jo renders it comic with nonsense. Fred, another visitor, lifts his part of the tale from The Sea Lion, a sea-faring adventure, and Sally gives it a mermaid twist. Amy translates it into the fairy tale realm and Laurie brings it back to nonsense. The genre each character selects

is significant. Amy chooses to invoke the goose girl, which is, of course, herself as she is referred to as a goose by the other girls (Alcott 3 and 4). Brooke tells how he, as a knight, would like to rescue the princesses, particularly “one sweet face” which the reader understands is Meg (Alcott 128). Meg rewrites Brooke’s princesses, turning them into one evil spectre. Laurie’s tale tells of how impossible it is for the knight to break into the princesses’ domain, something he must feel deeply as he is the outsider in the March girls’ lives. He also presents the knight as mounting the colt “who stood by him through thick and thin” (Alcott 130). One cannot help but feel that the colt represents Jo, as she has been described as colt-like (Alcott 4, 26). Laurie’s story perhaps represents his desire to master her, sexually or otherwise. Regardless, this narrative play shows the use of literary conventions and the expectations they set up and overturn. The fictions within the fiction point to the constructed nature of the texts and the interconnectedness of the story and the person’s life, effectively blurring the line between fiction and reality. Like Yonge, Alcott seems aware of the conventions she is using and overturning. She emphasizes her own agency in her self-conscious nod towards her own generic game-playing.

The self-reflexivity that affirms Alcott’s agency in revising traditional stories is heightened by the narrator’s often intrusive comments in Little Women. Bernstein has commented on the intrusive narrator’s comments, particularly about old maids (see Alcott 440-41). She claims that, in her aside about spinsters, Alcott “undermines her own text” by acknowledging her shortcomings as narrator. After her lecture on spinsters, the narrator returns to the novel’s action: “Jo must have fallen asleep,” she writes and adds a parenthetical apology, “(as I dare say my reader has during this little homily)” (Alcott 441). Alcott also uses these comments to blur the lines between fact and fiction: her narrator’s intrusions consistently affirm that readers are reading a fiction, yet the narrator often would have readers believe in the truth of the tale. After presenting the girls’ Pickwick Paper in its entirety, for example, the narrator adds in

parentheses: "(I beg leave to assure my readers [that this paper] is a bona fide copy of one written by bona fide girls once upon a time)" (Alcott 104). Alcott's narrator transgresses for a parenthetical moment the boundary of fiction with this truth-claim. By asserting that this one particular document is real, she forces the reader to question how much of the other material is factual. However, this questioning can also be reversed: if the fiction is factual, the reader can perhaps understand how much of real life is constructed like a fiction.

Alcott's narrator intrudes again when Jo is negotiating with an editor, Mr. Dashwood. First, Dashwood says, "We'll take this" and the narrator adds in parentheses "(editors never say 'I')" (Alcott 347). This parenthetical aside gives personality and life to the narrator. It also takes the reader outside the boundaries of the fiction to the problems the writer must face. Alcott's narrator intrudes again a few paragraphs later. Jo's "moral reflections" have been excised from her story by Dashwood and she is bewildered because she believes morals are important. Dashwood replies, "'morals don't sell nowadays;' which was not quite a correct statement, by the way" (347). The appearance of Alcott's narrator in a discussion about writing becomes ironic. The narrator, like the author, writing a gently moral text for young women, knows that morals do indeed sell, as is evident by the widespread popularity of the first volume of Little Women. Here again, Alcott blurs the line between fact and fiction. Alcott's narrator also asserts that the work is fiction at the end of the first volume: "The curtain falls upon Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. Whether it rises again, depends upon the reception given to the first act of the domestic drama called 'LITTLE WOMEN'" (Alcott 235). The narrator seems to counter her own truth-claims by indicating that the work is wholeheartedly fictional, comparing it to a play. But, because she must wait for public opinion before the curtain rises again, she indicates that it is not only the March girls' play, but also her own. The next act of the narrator's

life, whether she will come into being by writing the next act of the girls' lives, depends on her readers.

Like Yonge, Alcott shows that the domestic sphere, rarely the stuff of fiction, contains the same emotion, adventure, and excitement of romance novels, albeit in a different form. She includes and alters the cultural scripts she has inherited, exposing her own agency. For example, self-reflexive statements appear frequently in the March girls' understanding of themselves. The girls often compare themselves to novel heroines, particularly when they discuss romantic relationships. This literary self-reference serves two purposes. Firstly, it establishes an irony--the girls are, in fact, characters in novels--which blurs the lines between fact and fiction yet again. Secondly, it shows how their lives do not reflect the romance novels which they read: Alcott again demonstrates where she diverges from the traditions that preceded her by showing the girls' confusion over the difference between their life and fiction. In trying to determine whether Meg loves Brooke, for example, Jo reveals that her understanding of love comes from novels: "In novels, the girls show it by starting and blushing, fainting away, growing thin, and acting like fools" (Alcott 302). Healthy Meg has none of these symptoms. She does, however, compare her romantic situation to the ones in romance novels. After revealing the secret of her bogus love letter from Brooke, she confesses, "While I was deciding what to say, I felt like the girls in books who have such things to do" (Alcott 208). Jo insists to Meg that she won't refuse Brooke if he speaks: "If he goes on like the rejected lover in books, you'll give in" (Alcott 227). When Brooke does speak, Meg enjoys her power over him, especially when he "looked decidedly more like the novel heroes whom she admired" (Alcott 229). In showing the similarities and differences between the girls' experiences and their expectations gleaned from literature, Alcott revises traditional fiction to more accurately reflect her characters' lives.

44

Like Meg's, Amy's relationships with men are informed by her novel-reading. During her flirtation with Fred in Europe, Amy writes home: "I felt as if I'd got into a romance, . . . waiting for my lover--like a real story-book girl" (Alcott 319). When she begins her serious love relationship with Laurie, Amy does not use fictional metaphors to describe it. Laurie seems to imagine his proposal to her in a stereotypical way, however: "He had rather imagined that the denouement would take place in the chateau garden by moonlight, and in the most graceful and decorous manner" (Alcott 430). This setting is the stuff of romance novels. Alcott asserts that she is not giving her readers a romance novel by having the proposal settled "on the lake, at noonday, in a few blunt words" (Alcott 430). However, this disruption of romance novel conventions is shaken back into conventionality when Jo puts the letter announcing their engagement down after reading it, "as one might shut the covers of a lovely romance" (Alcott 438). Nonetheless, Alcott has successfully re-written the romance to give it a more ordinary and everyday bluntness. Like Yonge, she effectively romanticizes everyday life. Even meek Beth, although without a lover, is compared to a novel character. When she dies after her long illness, the narrator writes, "Seldom, except in books, do the dying utter memorable words, see visions, or depart with beatified countenances" (Alcott 419). Through irony--Beth is, after all, a character in a book--Alcott asserts where she differs from literary conventions that dictate memorable death scenes and exalted status for the dying.

Perhaps the most intriguing element of self-reflexivity in Alcott's novel is Jo's writing, which a number of critics have treated (see Bernstein, Keyser, and Bassil, for example). Veronica Bassil points out that Jo learns to write for her family; in so doing, Jo finds her subject in the March family's domestic life: "Here Alcott's novel turns back on itself, for Jo is both the subject and the author of Little Women" (Bassil 195). In depicting Jo as a writer who is learning to find her niche and whose niche is discovered to be the domestic genre the reader holds in her hands, Alcott allows her text a

metafictional level, writing about the process of writing. Again, this metafictional quality to Little Women blurs the line between reality and fiction. If the reader reads the book Jo has written, one that contains truth-claims and narrative asides, then Jo becomes like a real person and her book an historical rather than fictional document. Conversely, if Jo is a fictional character and readers are reading the book she wrote, then the book becomes doubly fictitious--a fictionalized account of a fictional family. The self-consciously fictional element of Little Women is emphasized through this heightened self-reflexivity. Alcott asserts her agency in transforming the domestic sphere into exciting, adventurous fiction: like Yonge, she exposes how the cultural scripts she inherits do not reflect girls' lives; yet, she suggests that the emotional content of grander fiction--like romances and sensation stories--can also be found in a domestic setting.

Montgomery's novel carries on the tradition established by the Daisy Chain and Little Women. Humphrey Carpenter laments the appearance of Little Women on the literary scene because, while he believes it to be a good novel, he thinks that it spawned a genre of happy girl stories of lesser literary value, including Anne of Green Gables (Carpenter 98; see also note 77 on p. 227). While I take issue with Carpenter's evaluation, his comments are important for establishing Montgomery's sources for her work. She does indeed seem to be working from the tradition of Little Women. Anne despairs when her hair is cut off, for example: "This is such an unromantic affliction. The girls in novels lose their hair in fevers or sell it to get money for some good deed" (Montgomery 218). Of course, Jo cuts her hair and sells it to finance her mother's trip to their sick father.

Montgomery also echoes Alcott when Anne, like Amy, is punished at school. Amy is discovered with the forbidden pickled limes in her desk. As punishment, she is struck by a ruler and must stand on a platform in front of the school. She refuses to take this punishment lightly and leaves the school never to return. Anne, on the other

hand, breaks her slate over Gilbert's head in a fit of temper and is forced to stand on the platform. Unlike Amy, she bears this punishment. However, when she must sit with the boys as punishment for being late, she endures the day, but leaves school with no intention of returning. "I'll learn my lessons at home," she announces to Marilla (Montgomery 117). Anne wishes to do what Amy did, and, like Amy, finds her family to be receptive to her decision.

Montgomery's novel abounds with literary allusions, revealing the traditions that have influenced her and where she deviates from them.³ Mary Rubio argues that Montgomery

both works within the traditional literary genre of domestic romance and yet circumvents its restrictive conventions when she critiques her society; . . . she decides to incorporate elements of women's experience that were not usually dealt with in fiction for women and children in her era. (Rubio 8)

As Rubio suggests, Montgomery employs the grand language of literature, such as romances and Shakespearean plays, so Anne can articulate her painful emotions in a way that is both humorous and telling. In doing so, Montgomery, like Yonge and Alcott, also shows that the domestic sphere--Anne's rural environment--can be as romantic, exciting, and sensational as the aristocratic courts and larger-than-life plots of romance. For example, Montgomery re-writes Tennyson's idyll "Lancelot and Elaine" from Idylls of the King in her chapter "An Unfortunate Lily Maid."⁴ Tennyson's Elaine "lived in fantasy" in her belief that love was possible between her and Lancelot. A victim of unrequited love and Lancelot's callous disregard, Elaine dies on a barge journeying to Camelot. Although described as "wilfull," Elaine has relatively little power and agency in this idyll, except for her effect on the jealous queen and in her dramatic death. Montgomery reconstructs the Elaine story by investing her Elaine--Anne--with more self-determination. Montgomery also creates irony by having the vibrant, inherently imperfect but lovable Anne play the role of the good, faithful Elaine

who loves the imperfect, sinful Lancelot. Perhaps Anne herself recognizes her inappropriateness for this submissive role as she claims she cannot act the part of Elaine because of her colouring. Nevertheless, she climbs onto the flat they have decorated as a barge and the girls run off to be Lancelot, Arthur, and Guenevere in Camelot. "Then something happened that was not at all romantic," and the "barge" springs a leak (Montgomery 223). Anne is left gripping on to a bridge pile, praying for rescue. Unlike Elaine, she lacks the desire to die for romance. Also, unlike Elaine, Anne is rescued. Gilbert happens by in his father's dory and hauls her into his boat. She thanks him curtly and refuses to befriend him, despite his overtures of friendliness. The girls are not blind to the romance of being rescued by Gilbert: "it's so romantic," Jane exclaims (Montgomery 226). Anne, perhaps more like Lancelot than Elaine, refuses to see the potential for love and romance. The roles are reversed: Anne is Lancelot, leaving without a backward glance, while Gilbert is the unloved Elaine, running to aid Anne/Lancelot. In Montgomery's version, moreover, neither party needs to die. Rather, the two characters are reconciled at the end of the novel. Working from the scripts she has inherited, such as Tennyson's poem, Montgomery, like her predecessors, shows where she overturns traditional romance. She invests the domestic with the excitement and emotional intensity of romance fiction.

Like Yonge and Alcott, Montgomery makes use of self-reflexive statements in order to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. Epperly states that Anne has been "indoctrinated by literary romances" (Epperly 27). Anne's reading informs her understanding of herself and her environment. Like Ethel and Jo before her, Anne makes reference to herself in relation to novel heroines. By having Anne comment on herself as being unlike or like fictional heroines, Montgomery both establishes irony--the reader knows that Anne is a fictional heroine--and indicates where she diverges from the traditions that inform the novel. As Epperly points out, Anne is never unaware of the potential romance of her situation. When she and Diana have to part friendship,

Anne feels “a little consoled for the time being by this romantic parting” (Montgomery 132). Similarly, when she is off with Diana to save Minnie May from the croup, Anne is “far from being insensible to the romance of the situation” (Montgomery 142). While these examples would indicate where Anne’s life does imitate elements of romance novels--the anguish of lovers being forced apart, or the urgency of saving a sick child, for example--they also stress that she is an ordinary small-town girl who romanticizes her often painful and anxious everyday life.

Montgomery shows Anne inadvertently undermining the content of the romances she reads, again demonstrating where the author diverges from the literary tradition that preceded her by showing Anne’s inability to make sense of the traditions. On the way to Green Gables, Anne explains to Matthew that her red hair is her lifelong sorrow: “I read of a girl once in a novel who had a lifelong sorrow, but it wasn’t red hair. Her hair was pure gold rippling back from her alabaster brow. What is an alabaster brow?” (Montgomery 16-17). That Anne knows the lines by heart yet does not understand them exposes the phrases as the inflated conceits they often are. Here, Montgomery also hints that romance reading can create a sense of inadequacy because Anne cannot match up to the beautiful heroines with their golden hair. Even Shakespeare is not spared Anne’s inadvertent criticism, a criticism that comically renders the playwright’s grand phrases banal by pairing them with the ordinary. She tells Marilla, “I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I’ve never been able to believe it. I don’t believe a rose *would* be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage” (Montgomery 38). Montgomery also indicates how real life might never live up to reading and one’s active imagination while reading. She tells Marilla, “Long ago, before I had ever seen a diamond, I read about them and I tried to imagine what they would be like. I thought they would be lovely glimmering purple stones. When I saw a real diamond in a lady’s ring one day I was so disappointed I cried” (Montgomery 94-95).

The stuff of literature also informs the text through Anne's daily imaginings and naming of things. Anne explains to Marilla why she burnt a pie, for example. She had imagined she "was an enchanted princess shut up in a lonely tower with a handsome knight riding to my rescue on a coal-black steed" (Montgomery 162). Montgomery creates irony here also. Anne is a homely, skinny little girl in a rural Canadian kitchen, very unlike an enchanted princess. Her choice of story, though, lets readers understand the sense of loneliness and captivity she may feel. The discourse of romance, with all its extremes and excesses, can perhaps best articulate Anne's feelings of despair and grief.

Similarly, Anne re-names many of the ordinary places in Avonlea with grandiose names certainly culled from romance novels. The Avenue becomes "White Way of Delight." Barry's pond becomes "Lake of Shining Waters." In naming a path through the woods "Lover's Lane," Anne reveals that the idea did, in fact, come from a book: "Diana and I are reading a perfectly magnificent book and there's a Lover's Lane in it. So we wanted to have one, too" (Montgomery 106). The romantic re-naming of places shows Anne's keen desire to transcend ordinary life which has brought so much pain. The grand names also show the beauty of the place that Anne has come to, in comparison to where she must have been in the past. Moreover, the elaborateness at once reinforces and undermines through humour the romance genre that infuses Montgomery's writing.

Like Ethel who wished to write and Jo who did, Anne also has artistic ambitions. Anne's writing, like Jo's, creates textual self-consciousness. While Montgomery does not create a metafiction like Alcott does, she uses Anne's stories to expose romance traditions and suggest where she changes the story. Anne explains to Diana the plot of one story she wrote. Two young women, very beautiful, are the best of friends until Bertram De Vere arrives in town. Anne interrupts her retelling of the story to explain how she researched for the proposal scene. She asked Ruby Gillis,

who has older, married sisters, how proposals are conducted. Ruby relays how she eavesdropped on one sister's proposal: "Malcolm told Susan that his dad had given him the farm in his own name and then said, 'What do you say, darling pet, if we get hitched this fall?' And Susan said, 'Yes--no--I don't know--let me see,'--and there they were, engaged as quick as that" (Montgomery 209). Anne does not find this real life example romantic or compelling. She makes her fictional proposal "very flowery and poetical and Bertram went down on his knees, although Ruby Gillis says it isn't done nowadays" (Montgomery 209). Montgomery shows, in her own text, that marriage proposals are the stuff of everyday life, whereas in typical romances, like the one Anne concocts, they are mystical and "poetical." While Anne continually transforms her everyday experiences with elements from romance, Montgomery demystifies romance with everyday life. In this way, Montgomery, like Yonge and Alcott before her, displays agency in re-writing the stories she herself has inherited.

Contradictory plots and dialectical criticism

In self-consciously working within and altering literary conventions, these writers expose the romance of everyday life. In addition, as I have suggested, the authors seem to be re-working literary traditions in order to provide their characters with a greater number of options for development. They use traditional plot lines dealing with the heroine's choices among romantic love, domestic duty, and personal ambition. Dialectical criticism is helpful for examining the competing trajectories of the texts by revealing multiple contradictions, privileging no particular aspect of a contradiction, and enabling critics to understand both the power and the oppression in any given circumstance. As I mentioned in the introduction, Newton and Rosenfelt call for a dialectical criticism which examines the intersections of language and history, of ideology and material circumstance. This criticism "locates movement, transformation, process in the compatible development of two necessarily related entities . . . or in the

contradictory aspects of a single phenomenon” (Newton and Rosenfelt xxii).

Dialectical criticism, Newton and Rosenfelt write, “is a way of seeing that prompts us to locate in the same situation the forces of oppression and the seeds of resistance; to construct women in a given moment in history simultaneously as victims and as agents” (Newton and Rosenfelt xxii). Suggesting that dialectical criticism has “the capacity to embrace contradiction,” Newton and Rosenfelt believe that critics need to “interpret history not as an assortment of facts in a linear arrangement, not as a static tale of the unrelieved oppression of women or of their unalleviated triumphs, but as a process of transformation” (Newton and Rosenfelt xxiii). It is important to point out that this “process of transformation” does not imply never-ending progress or an utopian endpoint. Our understanding of history can never show it to be constantly smooth or progressive; rather, our own ideological standpoint, material conditions, and historical context can work to eclipse or highlight our recognition of resistance, agency, and power. However, if we examine history for the processes of transformation, the struggles of the past may take on a more positive aspect. As Newton and Rosenfelt write, “This dialectical approach enables us to view ideological struggle and social change as possible” (Newton and Rosenfelt xxiii).

While I embrace dialectical criticism for its ability to negotiate contradictory ideology, it does present its own potential weaknesses: it can set up oppositions such as “oppressed and oppressive, submissive and subversive, victim and agent, allies and enemies” (Newton and Rosenfelt xxix). While its primary directive is to embrace these oppositions and recognize their often simultaneous presence, dialectical criticism may reinforce the oppositional thinking that it sets out to dismantle. Therefore, it is important to stress that each element of an apparent contradiction or conflict is not mutually exclusive of the other. Because a heroine chooses to submit to duty, for example, this does not make self-fulfillment impossible. Because a heroine submits to dominant ideology, likewise, she does not necessarily lose her subversiveness: she

may have accommodated but remain rebellious. Similarly, the position of victim, if it is consciously assumed, can sometimes cloak a position of power: Prof. Bhaer in Little Men punishes a boy in an unusual manner. He insists that the boy hit him. While Bhaer inverts traditional roles, he maintains the power position, even while he appears to have relinquished it. It is also important to remember that contradictions are not necessarily paired off neatly, but may be multi-faceted. Rather than appearing like a binary opposition, the ideological and generic contradictions in the girls' stories I am studying are often prism-like, many sided and complex, even when I try to articulate them by trapping them into an oppositional structure.

Critics have often picked up the contradictory impulses in these texts, yet, more frequently, have focused their attentions on only one ideological message or another, rather than embracing the contradictions. One brand of criticism for all three novelists tends to see the works as decidedly anti-feminist in nature, whether because of their narrative form, their ideological voice, or their message. Charlotte Yonge has not had much critical currency, being a popular, religious writer for, primarily, children and young adults. Many of Yonge's critics have judged her harshly for what they see as her adherence to the status quo. "She was emphatically no feminist," Georgina Battiscombe writes in the afterword to The Clever Woman of the Family (Battiscombe 370). While it is important to suggest an author's anti-feminist public stance, I cannot see how many of these critics provide insight into those of Yonge's texts which are not particularly anti-feminist. Cornelia Meigs, Anne Thaxter Eaton, Elizabeth Nesbitt and Ruth Hill Viguers express distress with Yonge's portrayal of women. In The Daisy Chain, they claim, "we find Charlotte expressing the characteristically Victorian belief in the inferiority of women" (Meigs et. al. 158). Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig are horrified with Yonge and writers of her ilk who try to persuade their readers to count their blessings and be content with their lot. Yonge "never tired," they write, "of impressing upon her girl readers the virtues of 'maiden lives' and amiable acceptance of

subordination (Cadogan and Craig 27). They cite the same quotation from Charlotte Yonge to justify their understanding of Yonge that Meigs and her co-writers do: “I have no hesitation in declaring my full belief in the inferiority of woman, nor that she brought it on herself” (Yonge Womankind, as cited in Meigs et. al. 158).

Many feminist critics have likewise condemned Little Women and the series for conforming to patriarchal ideology or convention. Brigid Brophy wrote a scathing article which claimed that “the dreadful books are masterpieces” and, in a comparison with Jane Austen, cites Alcott’s “lack of intellect” (Brophy 94, 96). While Stephanie Harrington suggests, somewhat guardedly, that Alcott was feminist for her time, she asserts that women now might find it difficult to read the books. Indirectly exposing her own perspective on the book, Harrington writes that Little Women might strike some women as

perfectly disgusting, banal, and craven service to male supremacy. For Alcott is at all times careful to keep the development of her characters safely hemmed in by comfortable moralisms that make it perfectly clear that even Jo, the most ‘unfeminine’ and independent of the March sisters, will come eventually to rest in the snug harbour of ‘Kirche, Küche und Kinder’. (Harrington 111)

Examples of critics recoiling in horror at Alcott’s portrayal of young womanhood are abundant. Alcott’s critics, unlike Yonge’s who seem to decry the “virtues of ‘maiden lives’,” take issue with Jo’s marriage to Professor Bhaer, which they see as capitulation to the patriarchal status quo. Judith Fetterley is perhaps one of the most important contributors to this faction of Alcott criticism, because she is so often cited. Fetterley expresses the belief that, because of Jo’s marriage, “Jo’s rebellion is neutralized, and she proves once and for all that she is a good little woman who wishes for nothing more than the chance to realize herself in the service of some superior male” (Fetterley “Little Women: Alcott’s Civil War,” 142).

Like Yonge and Alcott, Montgomery has been equally condemned for not presenting a liberating view of girlhood. Perry Nodelman believes that Anne and female characters of similar stories never grow up, but remain children forever. Janet Weiss-Town relates what Nodelman said about Anne of Green Gables in a class he was teaching: "Anne of Green Gables is one of the most definitively sexist books I know of" (Weiss-Town 12). Lesley Willis, scornfully dismissing Montgomery's writing style, believes that Montgomery produces an unbelievable fairy tale and wish-fulfillment story. T.D. MacLulich, in a less condemnatory and more academic fashion, stresses Montgomery's "awareness of the limitations that hedge a woman's life, but she seems unable to imagine any escape for her characters from a conventional role" (MacLulich 464).

MacLulich's statement is an excellent point of departure for understanding the limitations of this criticism. These critics, many coming from an early second-wave feminism heavily influenced by the ideology of modernism, want tales of liberation, independence, and freedom for their heroines. Unfortunately, this freedom from community pressure was not possible in the world of the writers. Each writer is employing the narrative technique of realism, even while using other genres, and is not presenting a utopian ideal or fantasy land, regardless of what Willis says of Montgomery's fairy tale style.⁵ Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery were portraying the world and its possibilities as they saw them. If the young women of the stories had little choice but to conform to social expectation, this is in part due to the fact that girls had little choice either. Recognizing this, we as feminist critics may still take issue with the fact that the ideological messages of these stories reinforce stereotypical roles for women. However, I will argue that the heroines do not simply conform, but rather negotiate for their own empowerment and selfhood. The critics who focus solely on the oppression of female characters may fall into a trap that further victimizes women. Mary Poovey suggests that this perspective can "combat complacency because it

refuses to accept as straightforward triumphs women's participation in reproducing the dominant culture;" however, it may also "generate a sense of victimization among women readers that also defeats our desire to inaugurate change" (Poovey 22).

Alongside the body of criticism that condemns, however quietly, these writers for their ideological or narrative perspective, is one that considers them feminist. Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström's volume on Yonge's work, Be Good Sweet Maid, suggests that Yonge offers Christianity to her heroines as a strategy to compensate for oppression. Yonge does not reject outright the images of the domestic angel, Sandbach-Dahlström acknowledges, but rather "adopts these patterns of thought since they are useful in elevating women" (Sandbach-Dahlström 109). Sandbach-Dahlström believes that Yonge, "like other greater women writers of the age reveals an imaginative understanding of the pain involved in adjusting to the requirements that society and morality place upon her sex," and that Yonge offers as compensation "those Christian beliefs which can justify the way in which women's lives are ordered" (Sandbach-Dahlström 10, 6). Sandbach-Dahlström does not state that Yonge is a feminist, but, in her analysis of how Yonge's women achieve power through traditional routes, her sympathies with Yonge's cause is clear.

The criticism singing Alcott's praises for her portrayal of female independence and autonomy is much more plentiful than the positive work on Yonge. This faction of criticism does not necessarily focus on Jo's marriage (often read as capitulation to patriarchy), but on the character of Jo. Elizabeth Janeway writes, "Jo is a unique creation: the one young woman in 19th century fiction who maintains her individual independence, who gives up no part of her autonomy as payment for being born a woman--and who gets away with it" (Janeway 98). Likewise, Elaine Showalter believes that Jo redefines genius in a feminine form (Sister's Choice 59). Another positive perspective is offered by Lavinia Russ's analysis of Jo as a rebel who quietly, rather than destructively, works to change the world.

Critics have been more hesitant in seeing Anne of Anne of Green Gables a feminist character. Temma Berg is one critic who has heralded this novel as empowering for women: "If we define feminism as belief in a woman's power to change the world that threatens to confine her, then Anne Shirley and the books that tell her story convey a subtle but revolutionary feminism which has empowered generations of young girls" (Berg 128). This celebratory criticism, like that which condemns the books, may be closing one ear to other voices and messages which other readers have identified. While this position may urge "us to reconceptualize power," Mary Poovey points out that it "can lead either to the idealization of women's separatism that a critique of separate spheres should undermine or else to the elimination of the possibility for any genuinely oppositional stance" (Poovey 22). Certainly, by delineating the injustices the girls face alongside their successes, Yonge's, Alcott's, and Montgomery's texts suggest that the status quo is not good enough; therefore, we cannot read these books as only celebratory.

The most recent critical perspective examines a "double message" in the works. Yonge has not shared in this newfound critical exploration, however, as she has become relatively unknown. Examining Alcott's novel, Greta Gaard suggests that the overt message of Little Women supports the notion of women's self-denial, while the covert message reveals that women are not reconciled to, and see the injustice inherent in, their expected role (Gaard 4). Catharine Stimpson feels that one part of the text encourages rebellion in the heroine while another demands conformity (Stimpson 969). John Crowley, too, points out that while Little Women depicts the breaking of Jo's will, it is still subversive because of the ambivalence Alcott expresses (Crowley 389). Likewise, Montgomery criticism in recent years has stressed the duplicity in her texts. Mary Rubio explains that Montgomery's extraordinary appeal results from her ability "to reinforce all the prevailing ideologies which her conventional readers expected while at the same time embedding a countertext of rebellion for those who

were clever enough to read between the lines” (Rubio 8). Susan Drain expresses a similar perspective: Anne of Green Gables “both conforms to and resists convention” (Drain “Feminine Convention” 40). Elizabeth Epperly argues that, in the final analysis, “Montgomery shows us how respectable but also imaginative and strong girls and women depart from and ultimately conform to cultural expectations” (Epperly 249). Epperly sees that Anne does fit in and conform to community expectations, but this conformity does not erase her powerful spirit.

Potential problems arise even in these critical viewpoints that embrace as much of the text as possible. In discussing overt and covert messages, critics might be privileging one message over the other. The “covert” or “encoded” message or “subtext” or “countertext” will take on a greater significance. Also, by insisting that the progressive message is a subterranean one, buried under the surface text, or hidden somehow by codes or devious plot devices, critics might give the impression that one message of the text is not easily accessible to ordinary readers, perhaps particularly to children. I agree wholeheartedly with these critics that all three authors, not just Alcott and Montgomery, have contradictory messages in their texts. However, I do not agree that one is necessarily muted or under the surface or encoded. Instead, both narrative messages, part of the same ideology which forms and transmits the texts, wrestle with each other in a never-ending struggle. Susan Drain recognizes this in Anne of Green Gables when she writes that “the resulting tensions . . . actually hold the novel together” (Drain “Feminine Convention” 40).

The heroine’s ability to negotiate these swirling contradictions empowers her, enables her to both conform and rebel. It is here that dialectical criticism can make a difference by identifying and examining apparently competing plots. The conflict between the plots highlighting romantic love, domestic duty, and personal ambition are not simple or easily reconciled, as testified by the diverse critical perspectives on the books. The clash between romantic love and family duty does not seem to allow for a

feminist reading, as both plots encourage the heroine to accept an unfulfilling role. After first examining this plot conflict, I will show that each author tempers her heroine's "sacrifice," whether to romantic love or domestic duty, by emphasizing personal ambition. In this way, the heroines negotiate the conflicts before them with success in achieving their desires, modified by accommodation to community pressure.

As I have discussed, Yonge's novel becomes self-reflexive in order to show its consciousness of literary conventions. When Ethel begins her abortive love affair with Norman Ogilvie during her one trip to London, The Daisy Chain becomes extremely self-conscious, thus emphasizing the conflict between romantic love and Ethel's domestic duty. A marriage between the two characters never takes place because Ethel remains committed to her father. Flora exclaims to Ethel: "you are the very girl for such a *héros de Roman*, and it has embellished you more than all my Paris fineries" (Yonge 388). Ogilvie, as Flora suggests, is the perfect novel hero, as he is in fact the romantic hero of Yonge's novel. Unfortunately, Yonge dismisses him rather quickly and he does not become more than a minor secondary character. As Flora says to Ethel before they meet Ogilvie, "he is a great hero of yours" (Yonge 373) and he does have all the stereotypical heroic features:

He was a pleasant, high-bred looking gentleman, brown-complexioned, and dark-eyed, with a brisk and resolute cast of countenance, that, Ethel thought, might have suited Norman of Glenbracken who died on the ruddy Lion of Scotland, and speaking with the very same slight degree of Scottish intonation as she remembered in her mother, making a most home-like sound in her ears. (Yonge 374)

Ogilvie and Ethel connect by sharing witty repartee. It was "exciting to argue with him" and she had "that sense of power on his side, which is always attractive to women" (Yonge 376). Moreover, "she felt her intercourse with him a sort of

intoxication” (Yonge 391). Ethel is obviously attracted to the young man and feels contented only when she has his attention.

The romance is disrupted by the appearance of Dr. May, where Ethel’s avowed allegiance lies. Dr. May is ignorant of the blossoming relationship and attempts to monopolize Ethel’s time. Ethel is made miserable by her father’s demands and experiences happiness only in moments when she sees Ogilvie. He joins her and her father in a walking party, for example, and “Ethel was happy again” (Yonge 283). Furthermore, when someone distracts Dr. May from Ethel, Ogilvie has a chance to approach her: “Ethel had another pleasant aside, until her father claimed her, and Mr. Ogilvie was absorbed among another party, and lost to her sight” (Yonge 283). She cannot even pay attention to her father for her interest in the young man: “She caught herself missing the thread of [her father’s] discourse in trying to hear what Mr. Ogilvie was saying to Flora about a trip to Glenbracken” (Yonge 384).

The conflict for Ethel between doing her duty to her father and her desire to be with Norman Ogilvie quickly comes to a head. When Dr. May kisses her, she feels guilt about her desire for Ogilvie: “It [the kiss] was very homelike, and it brought a sudden flash of thought across Ethel. What had she been doing? She had been impatient of her father’s monopoly of her!” (Yonge 384). She suspects that Ogilvie is attracted to her, but her sense of duty overwhelms her personal desires:

If her notion were really right, the misty brilliant future of mutual joy dazzled her! But there was another side: her father oppressed and lonely, Margaret ill and pining, Mary, neither companion nor authority, the children running wild; and she, who had mentally vowed never to forsake her father, far away, enjoying her own happiness. (Yonge 386)

Ethel feels needed at home because Flora’s marriage has placed additional household duties upon her (Yonge 364) and, indeed, Flora blames herself for Ethel and Ogilvie’s aborted romance, “for never were two people better matched” (Yonge 583).

Clearly, however, while Yonge is rewriting the typical romance plot, she and her narrator sympathize with Ethel and her plight and expect readers to do the same. A narrative intrusion indicates that Yonge is aware how readers may be responding to Ethel's decision. Dr. May speaks to Norman and Meta and the narrator interrupts his speech with a parenthetical aside: "'Very few marry a first love.' (Ah, Ethel!)" (Yonge 458). The text foregrounds the sadness of Ethel's sacrifice. Ethel herself is not blind to her sacrifice. The narrator states, "Etheldred's dream was over" (Yonge 393). Home life seems rather "stale and unprofitable" and nothing has the spark it once had, including her beloved Cocks Moor (Yonge 402, 403). In fact, the attainment of money for Cocks Moor's church fails to interest Ethel (Yonge 414). She "drew her own moral" about her decision to sacrifice desire to duty: "sacrifice must not be selfish. One great resolution that has been costly, must not blind us in the daily details of life" (Yonge 405). Ethel herself realises that her one romance not coming to fruition has been a costly sacrifice.

Ogilvie, too, seems to have made a sacrifice because of Ethel's hasty departure from London. He marries a wealthy woman for money to accompany his aristocratic but financially unstable position. His marriage is described as not "too romantic" but "extremely dutiful" (Yonge 365). Indeed, Ogilvie seems to have exercised as much restraint as Ethel has by refusing invitations, from Flora, to visit the May household. The narrator later explains that he was attracted to Ethel, which was why he did not accept:

Remember, he had barely known her a fortnight, and probably had no reason to believe that he had made any impression on her. He knew how such an attachment would grieve his parents, and, surely, he was acting dutifully, and with self-denial and consideration, in not putting himself in the way of being further attracted. (Yonge 566)

Yonge rewrites the romance plot by substituting love of God for human love. However, she presents Ethel's situation as unbearably lonely. Ethel comes to realize, first, that no one really needs her at home (Yonge 402) and then that she would never feel fulfilled by her home duties:

Norman Ogilvie's marriage seemed to have fixed her lot in life; and what was that lot? Home and Cocks Moor had been her choice, and they were before her. Home! but her eyes had been opened to see that earthly homes may not endure, nor fill the heart. Her dear father might, indeed, claim her full-hearted devotion, but, to him, she was only one of many. Norman was no longer solely hers; and she had begun to understand that the unmarried woman must not seek undivided return of affection, and must not set her love, with exclusive eagerness, on aught below, but must be ready to cease in turn to be first with any. (Yonge 593)

Ethel recognizes that she will never be the first consideration of any of those she loves and she can "never . . . count on their affection as her sole right and unalienable possession" (Yonge 593). Therefore, she turns her sights to God with the understanding that earthly life is simply to be tolerated until she reaches a heavenly one. After setting the stage for a traditional romance, Yonge's resolution to Ethel's teenage years is disappointing. In one of her more self-reflexive moments, Yonge's narrator explains Ethel's response to Ogilvie's declining a visit to the May's household: "If Ethel breathed more freely, there was a sense that tranquility is uninteresting. It was, it must be confessed, a flat end to a romance" (Yonge 435). Yonge's narrator, her characters, and, certainly, her readers all must agree. Yet the sense of disappointment serves a purpose and is not simply an artistic failure. It exposes Ethel's only alternative: since she cannot further her education or work or write, she must marry or relinquish earthly love and happiness. The disappointment also stresses how unlike romance fiction everyday lives often are. How does a young woman like Ethel cope

when faced with a permanent disappointment? By adjusting to circumstances and turning to God, Yonge claims.

Alcott reinterprets Yonge's focus on duty. Jo, like Ethel, is faced with a seeming conflict between duty and romance in Little Women. Readers and critics have often lamented and wept over Jo's refusal to Laurie.⁶ Much like Norman Ogilvie, Laurie is the perfect novel hero: the wealthy next-door neighbour, attractive, graceful and gentlemanly. However, his relationship with Jo is not typically romantic. They romp, frolic and race together. In many ways, Laurie behaves very childishly with Jo. She plays "Mentor" to him (Alcott 326) and, symbolically, he winds her apron string around his finger (Alcott 327). When she rejects him, he responds "with a stamp," like an angry child (Alcott 363). Indeed, his behaviour after her rejection, while typical of a spurned hero of romance, might also be read as childish:

He was moody, irritable, and pensive by turns; lost his appetite, neglected his dress, and devoted much time to playing tempestuously on his piano; avoided Jo, but consoled himself by staring at her from his window, with a tragical face that haunted her dreams by night, and oppressed her with a heavy sense of guilt by day. (Alcott 369)

Amy, whom Laurie eventually marries, refuses to indulge the childish behaviour that characterizes his relationship with Jo.

Jo's refusal of Laurie, beginning with her winter in New York to help him detach himself, is motivated by her sense of duty to Beth, the ultimate symbol of domestic duty in the novel. When Beth's mood declines, Jo believes that she has discovered the cause--Beth is in love with Laurie. Because Beth becomes increasingly ill, Jo decides to absent herself from the domestic scene. She believes that Laurie will love Beth if everyone is out of the way: "As everyone was out of the way but herself, Jo began to feel that she ought to dispose of herself with all speed" (Alcott 328). She decides to go to New York to work as a governess where she meets Professor Bhaer.

After Jo's return, Beth reveals that she is troubled because she knows she will die soon. Jo confesses to Beth: "I thought that you loved him, Beth, and I went away because I couldn't" (Alcott 373). Jo's statement yields two interpretations. Either she did not love Laurie and went away hoping that he would turn to Beth, or, more intriguing, she could not love him if she believed that Beth did. After Beth's death, Jo confides in her mother: if Laurie had proposed again, she "might have said 'Yes'" (Alcott 437).

Jo's sense of duty to Beth disrupts her potential romance with Laurie.

Furthermore, from her deathbed, Beth exacts a promise from Jo:

You must take my place, Jo, and be everything to father and mother when I'm gone. They will turn to you--don't fail them; and if it's hard to work alone, remember that I don't forget you, and that you'll be happier in doing that, than writing splendid books, or seeing all the world; for love is the only thing we can carry with us when we go, and it makes the end so easy. (Alcott 418)

This demand of Beth's, more than Professor Bhaer's indirect reproof, causes Jo to renounce her ambition to write and live independently (Alcott 418-19). Indeed, she tries to give herself over to her duty: "She tried in a blind hopeless way to do her duty, secretly rebelling against it all the while" (Alcott 432).

Alcott seems to respond to Yonge's The Daisy Chain in the chapter about poor Jo's struggles to be dutiful. By writing in a self-reflexive manner, Alcott calls attention to how she is re-writing the typical moral tale:

Now if she [Jo] had been the heroine of a moral storybook, she ought at this period to have become quite saintly, renounced the world, and gone about doing good in a mortified bonnet, with tracts in her pocket. But you see Jo wasn't a heroine; she was only a struggling human girl, like hundreds of others, and she just acted out her nature, being sad, cross, listless or energetic, as the mood suggested. (Alcott 435)

The narrator takes pains to expose the deep level of despair Jo feels in this new role: “She was learning to do her duty, and to feel unhappy if she did not; but to do it cheerfully—ah, that was another thing!” (Alcott 435). The chapter title, “All Alone,” emphasizes the lack of return Jo receives for her dutiful sacrifices. Her mother recognizes how lonely Jo is (Alcott 437) and Jo thinks to herself, “everyone seems going away from me, and I’m all alone” (Alcott 439). When Amy and Laurie return home married, Jo’s single status becomes more apparent. She is left unescorted from the dining room (Alcott 449) and experiences “a sudden sense of loneliness . . . for even Teddy had deserted her” (Alcott 450).

In her loneliness, Jo’s thoughts turn to Professor Bhaer for consolation. Her relationship with the professor is not typically romantic, which is good for Jo as “she preferred imaginary heroes to real ones” (Alcott 324). Unlike Laurie, Bhaer is certainly not a typical novel hero, and, as Showalter remarks, he is “unconfined by American codes of masculinity” (Showalter, Sister’s Choice 61). Describing Bhaer as “a queer-looking man” and “poor as a church mouse,” Jo tells her family that it is “not a very romantic story,” further delineating how far Alcott is straying from the path of conventional romance (Alcott 334). Alcott’s narrator makes clear that Jo, through her friendship with Professor Bhaer, is “laying a foundation for the sensation story of her life.” Even though Jo has given up writing sensation stories at the Professor’s behest, the narrator is still writing one.

When Bhaer arrives at Jo’s doorstep then, in her loneliest time, she is overjoyed. Unlike Ethel, Jo feels little compunction in choosing romantic love over family duty. And, in a deus ex machina, Aunt Josephine dies, leaving her estate, Plumfield, to Jo, so she and the Professor can finally marry. Significantly, the means for the marriage and the couple’s survival is provided by Jo: she develops the plan to transform Plumfield into a school for boys. Alcott rewrites Ethel’s painful story with

Jo's, allowing happiness and fulfillment for her heroine, a family and a place of her own.

While Yonge and Alcott seem to create a dichotomy between domestic duty and romantic love, Montgomery inextricably intertwines the two contradictory elements of the narrative. Because Anne begins the novel at a younger age than the other two heroines and the time span of the first novel is shorter, the romance elements are greatly restricted. However, Montgomery's heroine is rewarded for her duty with the possibility of romance. Epperly has pointed out that Anne must learn to see and value everyday romance over the fantastical romances she reads. Anne cannot see her feelings for Gilbert, or his for her, because they do not resemble the feelings she reads in romances. In Anne of Avonlea, for example, she indicates that Gilbert is not her ideal man, an image obviously gleaned from the pages of fiction: "Anne thought Gilbert was a very handsome lad, even though he didn't look at all like her ideal man . . . He must be very tall and distinguished looking, with melancholy inscrutable eyes, and a melting sympathetic voice" (Montgomery AA 168). Throughout Anne of Green Gables, Anne keeps her friendship with Gilbert at bay, refusing even to consider the romantic implications of his behaviour. After the Lily Maid episode, when Gilbert rescues her, and the other girls effuse about the romance of the situation, Anne is dismissive. Afterwards she tells Matthew that she will discard romance, but he suggests she retain some of it (Montgomery 228). Montgomery establishes, then, that Anne cannot see the potential for real-life romance before the moment she accepts her duty.

Anne's duty, which critics such as Elizabeth Segal might decry as capitulation to social pressure and a limited female adulthood,⁷ is made manifest when Anne relinquishes her four-year scholarship to Redmond University to stay home with Marilla at Green Gables. Superficially Anne appears to have given in to community pressure--not only is she more demure but she will not go away to school. She has

conformed to the domestic ideal. Yet the sacrifice can also be seen as representing active agency for Anne. Susan Drain suggests that the process of adjustment in the novel is mutual and does not imply conformity only on the part of the child (Drain "Community and the Individual in Anne of Green Gables," 15). Anne must actively take on the responsibility of belonging in order to truly have her home. Her self-sacrifice in Drain's view, then, is "a commitment which confirms belonging" (Drain "Community and the Individual in Anne of Green Gables," 19). In addition to this affirmation of Anne's place in Avonlea society, a sense of power manifests itself for Anne in the "sacrifice" as well: Green Gables can only be kept if Anne stays to look after things. She takes on the parental role of caring for the almost blind Marilla and overseeing the maintenance of Green Gables.

Furthermore, as Gabriella Ahmansson points out, the real sacrifice is not made by Anne but by Gilbert (Ahmansson 71). He, like Anne, is unable to go away to university and gives up his teaching position at the Avonlea school for Anne. He is not motivated to do this by friendship as they have hardly been civil to each other in four years. Rachel Lynde explains: "Real self-sacrifice, too, for he'll have his board to pay at White Sands, and everybody knows he's got to earn his own way through college" (Montgomery 306). Gilbert's sacrifice is a gloss on Anne's: he gains relatively little by it, whereas Anne keeps Green Gables and Marilla and her sense of home. One could argue that Gilbert makes his sacrifice because he is attracted to Anne and hopes to gain her affection by it. The reverse argument could of course be made. Anne sacrifices her schooling to Green Gables because she hopes to maintain her home by her sacrifice. Neither of the two young people is more self-serving than the other. The parallel between the two sacrifices is clearly established. When Anne announces her decision to Marilla, Marilla exclaims: "I can't let you sacrifice yourself so for me" (Montgomery 305). Anne echoes Marilla's words almost exactly only two pages later, when she

discovers Gilbert's sacrifice: "I don't think I ought to let Gilbert make such a sacrifice for--for me" (Montgomery 306).

The resolutions of these conflicts carry ideological messages. Because Yonge's heroine resigns herself to home duties and turns to God for reassurance, the reader understands that self-sacrifice is laudable: community is more important than individual happiness. When Jo embraces a patriarchal marriage and relinquishes her cherished independence, Alcott suggests that not even strong-willed Jo can withstand social pressures to conform. Montgomery's Anne embraces her duty and is rewarded by the potential for romance which would seem to indicate that self-sacrifice carries rewards. However, a different light is shed on each girl's position by the plot line the authors develop around their heroine's ambition.

Ethel, in The Daisy Chain, may abandon her romance for unfulfilling home duties; however, she renegotiates her ambition and maintains it. Ethel's first ambition is to follow Norman's schooling. Not in public school herself, she does the same lessons as Norman does, even though he is a year ahead of her and at the top of his class. She does not want her family to know about her classical studies (Yonge 7), although they do. Her father threatens to "put an end to all the Latin and Greek" when he is piqued by Ethel's inadequacies (Yonge 62). When she opens the school at Cocks Moor, Ethel becomes sorely overtaxed, as her governess points out. In what becomes a list of Ethel's accomplishments, the governess complains to Margaret about Ethel's teaching, her Latin and Greek studies, Ethel's own studies with the governess, and her home duties (Yonge 159). Margaret convinces Ethel to relinquish Norman's studies since she, as a woman, cannot go on to university. Ethel sacrifices this ambition: "On her own principle, that to embrace a task heartily, renders it no longer irksome, she called on herself to sacrifice her studies and her regularity as far as was needful, to make her available for home requirements" (Yonge 308-09). She also surrenders her ambition to write after Richard criticizes a poem she has published (Yonge 343).

Ethel does not abandon Cocks Moor, however. Her ambition of establishing a school and church for the village form the basic structure of the novel: the novel begins with a visit to the community and ends with Ethel greeting her father on the steps of the completed church. Even though she is unable to pursue the education she wishes, she confirms education as the centre of her own sense of identity by creating the school at Cocks Moor. Moreover, she manages to negotiate her ever-present home duties and her work at Cocks Moor. While Ethel's work for the poor community may be perceived by readers today as a dutiful charity, in the novel it is presented as an ambition, an extra hobby of Ethel's. The Mays do not necessarily approve. Ethel's brother Norman, for example, is revolted by Cocks Moor and wants Dr. May to prevent Ethel from going (Yonge 187). When Ethel shows an inability to watch her younger brother, her father threatens her again, except he expands the threat to include Cocks Moor: "I'll put a stop to all schools and Greek, if it is to lead to this and make you good for nothing" (Yonge 123). This threat stresses his belief that Cocks Moor is an extracurricular interest of Ethel's and should be secondary to household matters. Similarly, Mr. Wilmot shares his impression of Ethel's project with Margaret. Their conversation suggests that Ethel's desire for work is not typical for a young woman. Wilmot says:

[There's] such a spirit of energy in her, that if she does not act, she will either speculate and theorize, or pine and prey on herself. I do believe that hard homely work, such as this school-keeping, is the best outlet for what might otherwise run to extravagance--more especially as you say the hope of it has already been an incentive to improvement on home duties. (Yonge 136)

Wilmot's statement shows that Ethel's work in Cocks Moor is not generally regarded as dutiful or feminine. However, if she improves her home duties because of her ambition, her family will accept her desire to work in the poor community. Ethel's renegotiated ambition – Cocks Moor instead of writing or her own education– is incompatible with marriage, however. If she were to marry Ogilvie, she would need to

move to Glenbracken and give up Cocks Moor. As the narrator states, Ethel has chosen “home and *Cocks Moor*” over romance (Yonge 593, added emphasis). While Ethel and the reader may be disappointed by the abandoned romantic liaison, Yonge suggests that the disappointment and the loneliness is the price for having her noble ambition fulfilled. Her aspirations are not yet over: Ethel knows that “there was far more labour in store” for Cocks Moor’s improvement (Yonge 593).

In Little Women, Amy says “ambitious girls have a hard time . . . and often have to see youth, health, and precious opportunities go by, just for want of a little help at the right moment” (Alcott 460). Jo’s struggle to balance her ambitions with duty and romance suggests the truth to this statement. Early on, Jo tells the girls and Laurie what her aspirations are: “I think I shall write books, and get rich and famous” (Alcott 143). And, indeed, she does write. She supports the family with her sensation stories. Beth goes to the sea-side with Jo’s prize money: “‘The Duke’s Daughter’ paid the butcher’s bill, ‘A Phantom Hand’ put down a new carpet, and ‘The Curse of the Coventrys’ proved the blessing of the Marches in the way of groceries and gowns” (Alcott 269). Jo publishes a romance novel and, while in New York, publishes sensation fiction without her family’s knowledge.

As many critics have pointed out, Jo gives up her fiction-writing because Professor Bhaer lectures her on the dangers of sensation fiction. For these critics, this moment and her subsequent marriage to the man indicate Jo’s capitulation to patriarchal pressure: Carolyn Heilbrun suggests that “Alcott betrayed Jo” by marrying her (23); Judith Fetterley claims that “Jo’s rebellion is neutralized” by the marriage, and labels the marriage “capitulation” (“Alcott’s Civil War” 142). However, Jo is uncomfortable with her sensation stories before Bhaer says a word. She writes them solely for the money: her desire is to take Beth to the mountains and she hoards her pennies to this end (Alcott 349). It is, as I have mentioned, Beth who gives Jo a direct reproof about fiction-writing in general and not simply sensation fiction. Professor Bhaer steers Jo

from sensation fiction because he sees “she was doing what she was ashamed to own, and it troubled him” (Alcott 354). But he does not demand that she give up writing altogether as Beth does. When Jo is trying to fulfill her duty to her family, as promised to Beth, her mother suggests she start writing again: “That always used to make you happy” (Alcott 435). Marmee tells Jo: “Write something for us, and never mind the rest of the world” (Alcott 436). Herein lies Jo’s recipe for success; her story is published and acclaimed. If Jo can pair domestic duty with personal ambition, she will achieve her goals. Moreover, rather than capitulating to patriarchal pressure by giving up her desire to write, Jo’s writing facilitates her romance. Her published poem “In the Garrett” brings Professor Bhaer to her doorstep. He has read the lines about Jo’s loneliness and answers them. This resolution to the plot line conflict between romance and ambition shows the two to be compatible, almost necessary, for each other.

At the novel’s end, Jo has given up writing to care for her sons. She refers to her old ambition and says: “the life I wanted then seems selfish, lonely and cold to me now. I haven’t given up the hope that I may write a good book yet, but I can wait, and I’m sure it will be all the better for such experiences and illustrations as these [her children and husband]” (Alcott 489). Her aspirations are still alive. Jo goes on to become a famous writer in Little Men and, particularly, Jo’s Boys. She has negotiated to have a bit of everything, and, unlike Ethel, she gets it.

As does Anne. Anne negotiates the apparent conflict between romantic love, domestic duty, and personal ambition. Where Anne appears to have made a sacrifice in giving up her scholarship to Redmond for her home duties, she does not, in fact, give up her schooling. She plans to study Redmond courses “right here at Green Gables” (Montgomery 305). There is no capitulation to Mrs. Lynde’s notion that women don’t need an education (Montgomery 305). Furthermore, in Anne of the Island, Anne does attend Redmond on her scholarship and, later, becomes principal of a high school. She maintains Green Gables, and she goes on to fulfill her ambitions.

Like Ethel and Jo, Anne is presented as highly ambitious. However, her ambition is cloaked in the discourse of romantic love. The narrator highlights the tension between Gilbert and Anne by pointing out that Anne is "troubled with the stirrings of ambition" like Gilbert (Montgomery 278). Anne's hard-core ambition to be at the top of her class, to get into Queen's, and to win the Avery scholarship is depicted as displaced and repressed love for Gilbert. She wants to be at the top of her class only to beat him. Throughout the narrative, she attempts to disguise this rivalry by checking herself before finishing Gilbert's name. The following are several examples:

"I hate to stay home for Gil- some of the others will get ahead in class." (144)

"I don't really care whether Gil- whether anybody gets ahead of me in class or not." (161)

"And Gil- everybody will get ahead of me in class" (187)

"It would be such a disgrace to fail, especially if Gil- if the others passed."
(256)

In the discourse of romantic love, this slip of the tongue reveals Anne's emotional feelings towards Gilbert at the same time as it attempts to disguise them in her ambition. Montgomery makes Anne's ambition acceptable, where it might be improper for a young lady to want success, by hinting that it is only motivated by love for Gilbert. However, Anne also simply wants to be the top student in her class. In fact, the passionate sense of rivalry with Gilbert eventually leaves her, yet her ambition remains: "Anne no longer wished to win for the sake of defeating Gilbert; rather for the proud consciousness of a well-won victory over a worthy foeman" (285). The potential for romance between Anne and Gilbert makes Anne's ambition acceptable. Clearly, for Anne, romantic love and personal ambition seem to be necessary for one another. While pairing the two desires may not be seen as a laudable feminist goal, Montgomery uses the romantic discourse to allow her heroine fulfilled ambition.

However, once Anne marries Gilbert in Anne's House of Dreams (the fifth book in the series), she does relinquish her scholarly career to become "Mrs. Doctor." Montgomery hints that Anne is still writing, although her writing does not form a significant part of the narrative. In Anne's House of Dreams, for example, Owen Ford, a visiting writer, says to Anne: "Miss Bryant tells me that you write" (HD 138). To which, Anne replies modestly: "Oh, I do little things for children. I haven't done much since I was married. And I have no designs on a great Canadian novel" (HD 138). Anne's writing has never played a major role in the novels, yet it appears that she does not relinquish her ambition to be a writer.

The heroine of each novel negotiates the often conflicting choices of family duty, romantic relationships, and personal ambition. Moreover, the authors show themselves to have the ability to negotiate. They negotiate the scripts they inherit, infusing everyday life with the excitement of traditional literatures, and demonstrate a self-consciousness about where they have revised the literary conventions they use in their own texts. The plot lines developed around the heroine's choices may be typical for a female Bildungsroman, but each writer's resolution in turn shows a greater ability to embrace the contradictions between the three plots. Ethel cannot reconcile her desire for romance with her desire to serve her family. Even her ambition, while maintained, is difficult to balance with family duty. In re-writing The Daisy Chain, Alcott has Jo embrace the seeming contradiction between family duty, romance, and personal ambition. At the end of the novel, Jo has achieved a balance. Anne succeeds to a greater degree: her romance, duty, and ambition are interwoven.

The over-arching ideological message seems to espouse achieving a balance between conflicting pressures without overtaxing or alienating oneself. When Ethel takes on too many ambitious projects that conflict with her duties, she must choose between them. When Jo recognizes the loneliness inherent in independence, she desires a companion. When Anne realizes that her B.A. will mean nothing if she does

not have a home, she embraces her self-sacrifice. While critics might lament the curbing of the young women's ambitions and desires, they might also recognize the powerful negotiation of the varied choices presented to the heroines. The protagonists may not have exiled themselves or have become only artists or academics; but, at the end of the novels, they have what they want: Ethel establishes a church for Cocks Moor, Jo has work published and a loving family to provide for, and Anne has her home. In the three novels, these accomplishments were no easy task.

By establishing, through textual self-consciousness, their own agency in re-writing the cultural scripts they have inherited, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery not only create opportunities for their heroines, but they also educate their readers. The texts contain ideological messages the heroines must carefully negotiate, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Moreover, by their own act of creating texts that at once accommodate and diverge from tradition, these three authors show the reader where agency is possible. Not only the heroines indulge in occasional acts of rebelliousness, but, by modifying the traditions they employ, the writers do as well. Readers learn that, in each moment of articulation, change is possible.

Notes

¹ I am using the term “romance” very loosely and not in the generic sense of the word, necessarily. Occasionally, the romances referred to in the novels are romance genre romances, but mostly the girls’ reading refers to books of a romantic nature, dealing in grand emotion, aristocratic individuals, and love affairs.

² In Sister’s Choice, Elaine Showalter discusses Alcott’s use of Pilgrim’s Progress as well as her use of references to Dickens and other literary forms like newspapers (Showalter 51-53).

³ Elizabeth Epperly’s The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass is an excellent source for the range and identification of the allusions. Montgomery, as Epperly points out, uses the allusions quite often to create irony in her story. An example is Montgomery’s reference to Browning’s Pippa Passes in the final lines of Anne of Green Gables. While Pippa innocently believes everything is “right with the world” she is about to be sold into prostitution. By echoing these lines, Anne puts herself into Pippa’s position. A reader aware of Browning’s text might wonder if everything is as “right” as Anne believes. At the present moment, however, I am more interested in how these allusions reveal Montgomery’s source material.

⁴ Montgomery does not name the poem, although she does identify it as Tennyson’s. In Kevin Sullivan’s television production, Anne of Green Gables, the poem causing the unfortunate accident is Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott.” However, Montgomery lists off the characters which the girls must act out, including the father and brothers of Elaine, as well as Arthur, Lancelot and Guenevere, which leads me to believe that the reference is to the idyll. She also indicates that no-one else can fit on the flat to play the role of the mute servitor. Many of these characters do not appear in “The Lady of Shalott.”

⁵ Henry James called Yonge the forerunner of realism (Dennis 9). Alcott has been noted as employing realism. Montgomery's writing also has been called realism, even if it is tempered by romantic and other generic elements (see Ross, Sheckels).

⁶ Donna Campbell claims that the marriage between Jo and the Professor "disappointed almost everyone" (125). Lavinia Russ discusses Jo's rejection of Laurie: "And a girl in India cries when Jo refuses Laurie because she realizes suddenly that life is not going to hold a happy ending for her" (102).

⁷ Critics of Montgomery's novel tend to emphasize the responsibility and security of belonging in Anne's sacrifice of her college career. See Susan Drain ("Community and the Individual") and Patricia Kelly Santelmann, for example.

Chapter Two

There's No Place Like Home:

Negotiating Family

Individuals are caught in the fabric of social living, a weave that often constricts but ultimately forms the self.

--Katherine Joslin

In Robert Louis Stevenson's Kidnapped, the hero is kidnapped from the estate which is his patriarchal inheritance. The rest of the novel recounts his adventures as he attempts to return and claim his rightful place. Home and inheritance cause anxiety in the Bildungsroman, as young protagonists attempt to determine what to expect and where they belong. In the female Bildungsroman, girls rarely, if ever, are heir to estates and fortunes, yet the anxiety over home and place nevertheless manifests itself in a different form. Because their sphere is more circumscribed than a boy's and their position often less powerful, they must learn to negotiate family and community life with great care. A life beyond family and the immediate community was rarely an option for women in the nineteenth century, therefore they could not afford to alienate their communities. Often, as can be seen in novels like The Mill on the Floss, The Awakening, and A Daughter of Today, young women are unsuccessful in finding a solution to the contradictions they face. Girls' stories, like those of Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery, show young women who are successful, if only because they survive.

Rather than emphasizing the defiant independence of the heroine, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery highlight the girls' intersubjective identity: the girls know that they inhabit a communal world, that their sense of self is relative to others in their lives. These books do not suggest that family life is easy, and, thus, they educate their readers about the necessity for negotiation. By exposing the contradictions inherent in

family life, by constructing the family as both nurturing and oppressive, these three novels underscore the heroine's agency. Because the heroine is relatively powerless, she must accommodate herself to her family. However, the novels show that this accommodation is not passive. By introducing their readers to a family in crisis, each novel emblematically foregrounds the extent to which it questions the seemingly natural bonds of family life. Furthermore, through a discourse of "othering" on the basis of race, nationality, class, and kinship—of grand, perceived differences—the novels expose the intense anxiety over defining and maintaining family boundaries. Through the characters' continual re-articulation of family boundaries by pinpointing difference, the texts show the constructedness of family: it is not simply a biological given, but must be continually expressed and defined. This constant articulation, however, opens a space for negotiation and change. If the family is always in the process of being defined, then it is always open to new possibilities. In the previous chapter, I discussed the authors' agency in negotiating the genres they inherited. In this chapter, I will discuss how the authors expose the need to negotiate potentially oppressive family life because no other option exists for the young woman: the heroine's agency is highlighted by her negotiation, even though she finds herself in a relatively powerless position.

While many feminists have offered critiques of the family as an institution, Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh present an understanding of exclusionary family politics that explains why individuals continue to invest in an institution that may not be fulfilling.¹ They argue that "the family," always spoken of as if it were some universal, readily recognizable, fixed entity, is not just a cultural institution but also an ideology. This ideology of the family, "familism" in their terms, is fundamentally anti-social, as it privileges family members to the detriment of the community at large. They feel that the family is the agent of "class placement and an efficient mechanism for the creation and transmission of gender inequality" (Barrett and McIntosh 29):

The family embodies the principles of selfishness, exclusion and pursuit of private interest and contravenes those of altruism, community and pursuit of the public good. Society is divided into families and the divisions are deep, not merely ones of slight antipathy and mild distrust. (Barrett and McIntosh 47)

Most importantly, Barrett and McIntosh point out how damaging families can be to individuals within them:

The exclusion of outsiders and turning in to the little family group may seem attractive when it works well and when the family does satisfy its members' needs. But the little enclosed group can also be a trap, a prison whose walls and bars are constructed of the ideas of domestic privacy and autonomy.

(Barrett and McIntosh 56)

Barrett and McIntosh explore why individuals are attracted to family life and reject a viewpoint that would cast individuals as victims of a monolithic ideology. Rather, they write, "we need a theory of ideology that casts people as participants rather than as passive consumers" (Barrett and McIntosh 21). First, families provide emotional security: because society frowns upon the expression of emotional needs outside the family, the family becomes an important source for fulfilling these needs. The second reason individuals turn to the family is to raise children. In economic terms, two supporting parents supposedly makes the job easier, particularly because often one provides free childcare while the other earns the living. The cultural belief that two parents are crucial to the psychological development and emotional well-being of the child also makes the idea of the family difficult to refute. Individuals also commit to family life, thirdly and perhaps most importantly, because it has, in Barrett and McIntosh's words, "the appeal of the natural" (Barrett and McIntosh 26):

It is in the realm of gender, sexuality, marriage and the family that we are collectively most seduced by appeals to the natural. In this realm the shifting mores of practice are solidified, some to be sanctified and others condemned.

The prevailing form of family is seen as inevitable, as naturally given and biologically determined. As such, however, it is imbued with a unique social and moral force, since it is seen as the embodiment of general human values rather than the conventions of a particular society. (Barrett and McIntosh 27)

The family is naturalized through ideology, so people often do not even consider establishing a family a choice: the family is, instead, a biological given. Barrett and McIntosh blur the distinctions between family and the greater community with their concept of familism. While the family can be oppressive to individuals, individuals struggle for identity within family in order to maintain privilege and advantage in a society that devalues any system, institution, or structure that deviates from idealized family relations. Barrett and McIntosh suggest that familism promotes the false belief that there is no option beyond family life.

Intersubjectivity and family crisis

Ethel, Jo, and Anne cannot liberate themselves from the ideology they are heir to, one which privileges the family over all other relations. Indeed, the three girls crave the comforts and familiarity of home, even while they chafe against its restraints. With an understanding, then, of the lack of options familial ideology leaves, the girls' apparent accommodation to family and community constraints can be seen as agency--as actively choosing to fit in--rather than as resigned capitulation to external pressures. The girls in these stories are aware of their intersubjectivity, that their sense of identity is always relative and particularly centred within their family. Jessica Benjamin provides a clear understanding of intersubjectivity. A psychoanalyst, Benjamin reacts against traditional ego psychotherapy insofar as it suggests that the individual ego is paramount and that all development is an internal struggle. Individual development cannot be this way, she argues, because individuals, particularly as infants, are always in a dynamic relationship with another person or persons. The first relationship is the

one with the primary caregiver, and an individual's development is established by the dynamic of this relationship: the primary caregiver is not just an object or an other to the individual in question, but another subject in his or her own right. Benjamin emphasizes "the tension between interacting individuals rather than that within the individual," which is the approach of traditional psychoanalysis (Benjamin 29, original italics). Individuals as subjects do not meet with objects, but with other subjects.

Benjamin examines the mutuality of all interactions between individuals, rather than regarding one party as a static thing with significance only as the subject perceives it. She explains:

Intersubjective theory sees the relationship between self and other, with its tension between sameness and difference, as a continual exchange of influence. It focuses, not on a linear movement from oneness to separateness, but on the paradoxical balance between them. (49)

Benjamin believes that the individual must be able to develop the ability to embrace and maintain contradiction: to accept that difference and sameness, dominance and submission, independence and dependence all co-exist. Significant to my particular study is Benjamin's discussion of theories of development which have not focused on mutuality or intersubjectivity:

Differentiation requires, ideally, the reciprocity of self and other, the balance of assertion and recognition. While this may seem obvious, it has not been easy to conceptualize psychological development in terms of mutuality. Most theories of development have emphasized the goal of autonomy more than relatedness to others, leaving unexplored the territory in which subjects meet. (25)

Most feminist critics seem to take the approach which focuses on autonomy rather than relatedness when reading a girls' story.² These critics react with distress when the heroine does not achieve a visible, triumphant separateness, and they often misguidedly herald works like Kate Chopin's The Awakening and George Eliot's The Mill on the

Floss as examples of triumph (Showalter, "Tradition" 33; Levine 121). I would suggest that a healthy connectedness with a degree of autonomy is a greater success than rebellion and alienation, leading to death, as in The Mill on the Floss and The Awakening.

In order to delineate how The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables emphasize intersubjectivity rather than autonomy, I will briefly examine three novels by women writers which are considered more canonical. An examination of these novels reveals another possible cultural script for women, one that Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery did not choose, and emphasizes the success of the heroines in the girls' stories. All three texts, written for adults and not adolescents, convey the message that there is no place in society for a free-thinking, passionate woman. The Mill on the Floss (1860) by George Eliot is an excellent example of a British female Bildungsroman, largely contemporaneous with The Daisy Chain. Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899), while later than Alcott's novel and not a traditional Bildungsroman, can still be included in the comparison: it is the story of a young American woman who rebels against her social role and wishes to be an artist.³ It is a Bildungsroman in the sense that Edna Pontellier comes to an awareness of her position in society, albeit much later than traditional Bildungsroman protagonists. Sara Jeannette Duncan's A Daughter of Today (1894), a Canadian novel that predates Anne of Green Gables, is a Kunsterroman, a sub-genre of the Bildungsroman. It focuses on the early adulthood rather than the childhood of the American heroine. In each of these novels, the heroine alienates her community through her choices and behaviour; the result, in all three cases, is her death. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have written that "Eliot becomes entangled in contradictions that she can only resolve through acts of vengeance against her own characters" (Gilbert and Gubar 479)--a statement which can equally be applied to Chopin and Duncan. Each novel illuminates the contradictions of family and community life: ultimately, contrary to the message in girls' stories, each of these three

adult novels suggests that there is no escape or fulfillment for the heroine.

Each author presents family life as unfulfilling for the heroine: while nurturing, family is mostly oppressive. For Maggie in The Mill on the Floss, home life is riven with contradiction: she is torn between her maternal inheritance--the Dodson propriety and orderliness--and her paternal one--the Tulliver passion and spontaneity. Her 'loving' relationship with her brother, Tom, is actually abusive. Maggie tells him: "You have always enjoyed punishing me--you have always been hard and cruel to me: even when I was a little girl, and always loved you better than any one else in the world, you would let me go crying to bed without forgiving me" (Eliot 347). In her family, Maggie is constantly chastised because she is not attractive, her hair is straight, she is too forward and not sufficiently humble. She runs away to escape the constraints and realizes, while among the gypsies, how much she misses home. Her father, her only solace and source of encouragement, is also ineffectual. Because of his emotions and legal wrangling, the Tulliver family loses the mill and falls into poverty. While Mr. Tulliver supports Maggie emotionally, he proves unable to provide for her materially. Family does not provide Maggie with emotional, intellectual, or material fulfillment.

Likewise in The Awakening, Edna Pontellier does not find fulfillment within the confines of the traditional family. Chopin sets up a telling parallel between Mademoiselle Reisz and Madame Ratignolle. The first woman rejects family constraints and is a bitter eccentric with a lonely life, always moving on the margins of the larger community. Madame Ratignolle is the paragon of the domestic woman who completely devotes herself to the family. Edna does not find, in either woman's life choice, a role model which would satisfy her own needs. She tries to explain to an uncomprehending Madame Ratignolle that she does not feel able to sacrifice herself for her children: "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself" (Chopin 51). After awakening from her daily life "to realize her position in the universe as a human being," Edna does

not wish to continue living in the same manner (Chopin 14). She decides not to go to her childhood home for her sister's wedding, saying that "a wedding is one of the most lamentable spectacles on earth" (Chopin 71). She feels like one of her husband's possessions and rebels against the constraints of social obligations which she once graciously fulfilled. Edna's children, moreover, are the most ambiguous figures in her life. While she loves them, she regards the boys as "antagonists who had overcome her," and seeks a way to elude them (Chopin 123).

Of these three novels, Duncan's is perhaps the most derisive of family connections. Elfrida Bell, a fin de siècle, "New Woman," quite adamantly evinces distaste for her hometown. After she has moved to Paris, "the life at Sparta assumed the colours and very much the significance depicted on a bit of faded tapestry; when she thought of it, it was to groan that so many of her young impressionable years had been wasted there" (Duncan 25). She felt a "sincere and rigorous distain" for the town, which carries over to her parents (Duncan 14). Elfrida's parents fund her artistic experiments--first in Philadelphia, then overseas--yet do not understand or appreciate her art. After their financial decline, the Bells wish to come and live with Elfrida in London. Elfrida is distressed by this news which signals "the ruin of her independence, of her delicious solitariness, of the life that began and ended in her sense of the strange and the beautiful and the grotesque in a world of curious slaveries of which it suited her to be an alien spectator, amused and free" (Duncan 146). The situation is intolerable to her because she will be, as she has been, the "family idol" (Duncan 146). Not only does she express distaste for family connections and the tight-knit community of her childhood, but she also disdains forming her own family through marriage: "for women it is degrading--horrible! especially for women . . . to whom life may mean something else" (Duncan 157). Elfrida, more unequivocally than the other two heroines, rejects family connections of all kinds.

While the authors expose the pernicious facet of family life, they offer no

solutions to their heroines. Maggie Tulliver tries to behave as expected, but her passions take control when she is swept away by Stephen Guest against her own better judgement. In returning unmarried, repenting, and accepting the social punishment of ostracism for her sin, Maggie again attempts to conform to social dictates. She is constantly at war with two impulses in herself, representing the contradictory influences of two families. Ian Adam writes of Maggie's battle with the Dodson and Tulliver influences: "One has passion clouding his sense of reality, while the other's sense of reality neuters his passion. And the plight of Maggie's feeling life is that she finds difficulty in achieving a middle way between such famine and feast" (Adam 127). The contradiction cannot be resolved gracefully and Eliot conjures up the apocalyptic flood in order to kill off the heroine in a final redemptive act. Nina Auerbach writes: "Maggie has to be destroyed for the transformations [her] sins and sorrows caused" (183). Gilbert and Gubar point out that Maggie's attempt to save her brother--that ultimate moment of redemption--is suicidal. Her attempt to be self-sacrificing is taken to the extreme.

Edna Pontellier also finds it impossible to negotiate the contradictions. She wants to be neither Madame Reisz nor Madame Ratignolle. She does not want to belong to any man, yet desires Robert's love and Arobin's touches. She loves her children, yet feels oppressed by their demands and needs. She can find no single source of fulfillment; neither in her love affairs, nor in her art, nor in her friendships or family. Suicide seems the only option for Edna, and she returns to the sea, where she first discovered her power, to end her life by drowning.

Like Edna and Maggie, Elfrida cannot resolve the myriad contradictions that confront her. While many of them stem from her artistic failures, several cluster around issues of family and social life. She despises the institution of marriage and cherishes her state of independence, yet loves John Kendell. Because she has set herself up as being marginal to society, beyond social propriety and contemptuous of

social unions, Elfrida's feelings for Kendell are not reciprocated. Rather, he is quite amused by her. When she loses Kendall to Janet Cardiff, her best friend and artistic rival, Elfrida realizes with dismay that she has succeeded in defining herself as a solitary woman. She has little family contact, she is on the margins of London society, she is still artistically unsuccessful, and she lacks the love she desires. Unable to come to terms with her position, Elfrida commits suicide in an attempt to create an artistic masterpiece of herself.

The endings of these novels are troublesome and highly ambiguous. Critics have often labelled the endings triumphant, affirmative, or feminist, perpetuating the idea that women have no place in society, that an artistic, passionate woman has to die young, and that women cannot retain their integrity and freedom: George Levine indicates that the redemptive act which causes Maggie's death is "affirmative" (Levine 121); Showalter claims that Edna finds "feminine solitude" at the end of The Awakening, which is an upsetting description of suicide (Showalter, "Tradition" 33). These critics support a reading of the novels that tends to concur with, rather than react against, the myths that are our patriarchal inheritance. Like Richardson's Clarissa, these novels seem to say that the only good woman is a dead woman or that a woman who transgresses the boundaries of social propriety can be punished or redeemed only by death. Misao Dean claims that, in her work as a whole Duncan "challenges conventional formulations of women's lives in narrative; she rewrites the romance script that confines female characters to passive roles and to the happy ending of marriage" (Dean 58). However, in A Daughter of Today, Duncan has written a typical romance in which the good girl, Janet Cardiff, gets the man (and the artistic successes), and the bad girl, who cannot bend to society's will, dies.

The ideological message of all three novels is clear: conform or die. Martha Fodarski Black suggests that a slightly different point is espoused by Chopin's novel: "[Chopin] does not warn women to conform, but implicit in her imagery and her story

is the idea that without fulfilling work and the collaboration of men, female freedom may be destined to frustration” (Black 112). Arguably, these novels have a more powerful moral message than the supposedly didactic girls’ stories. Both types of novels indicate that there is no option besides family life for the very good reason, as Barrett and McIntosh might point out, that familial ideology is all-pervasive. Unlike girls’ stories, where the heroine negotiates for acceptance of individual difference, the message conveyed by the heroines’ deaths in these three novels is that women cannot find acceptance or fulfillment which is mutually satisfactory to themselves and their communities. While readers understand that all three characters are mistreated by their communities, no possibility for resolving the conflict—no chance for survival—is offered. Each novelist, in her own way, criticizes the society that would sacrifice such a noble figure as her heroine. But the heroine has to be sacrificed to point out where society has gone wrong: once again, the woman plays the sacrificial role. In girls’ stories, from The Daisy Chain to Pollyanna, the young protagonist may learn social decorum and conformity, yet she continues to challenge the community around her because she survives. Importantly, however, the writers of these girls’ stories do not pretend that accommodation to family life comes naturally, thus suggesting that the texts are critical of the very institution they exalt—the family.

The heroines of The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables meet contradictions and struggles similar to those which befall Maggie, Edna, and Elfrida, with one key difference: they negotiate the contradictions and survive. While Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery celebrate family life, they also show that it can be oppressive and unfulfilling for the heroines. In doing so, they emphasize the heroine’s agency in negotiating the contradiction. First, however, I will examine how each author highlights the anxiety surrounding family life. Each book depicts a family structure rendered abnormal due to some crisis or traumatic event, a powerful metaphor for the textual negotiations at play which do not naturalize or accept without question

the seemingly inescapable bonds of familism.

In The Daisy Chain, Yonge first introduces the reader to the entire May family and the peaceful, happy tenor which governs their daily life. This normal family is thrown into chaos when the mother is killed in a carriage accident which also seriously injures the father and eldest sister. The mother and sister share the name Margaret, suggesting a similar affinity for the mothering role. With neither mother nor surrogate mother at the helm of the family, the remaining children are forced to accept new roles and accommodate themselves to a different family structure. Dr. May says to Ethel and Flora, "Girls, we must learn carefulness and thoughtfulness. We have no one to take thought for us now" (Yonge 36). Ethel perhaps feels the loss of her mother most keenly, as she realizes that she "must take care of the little ones," a demand which comes from her father (Yonge 32). She recognizes that, with her mother gone, "there was no peacemaker now," "no one to tame her, no eye over her," and "no one to set her right" (Yonge 42, 43). While Margaret regains strength and adopts the mothering role, she remains an invalid, and Ethel must perform many of the maternal duties. The additional pressure placed on Ethel as a result of her mother's death does not diminish with time. When the family faces another crisis with the loss of the ship Alcestis and their brother Harry, Ethel must leave London for home (Yonge 389). The anxiety and pressure from the family shape Ethel's freedom of movement and her decisions. The novel emphasizes the precarious, constructed status of the family by showing how easily it can be completely shaken.

In Little Women, the March family faces a similar time of crisis which disrupts the family structure. The novel opens with the father away at the Civil War; the girls and their mother are left to fend for themselves. The father's absence allows, or even encourages, Jo to behave "in a gentlemanly manner" (Alcott 2) and to play "brother to us girls" (Alcott 3).⁴ In addition, crisis has visited the family previous to the war, making their wartime hardship more difficult. Like the Tulliver patriarch in The Mill on

the Floss, the March father lost his money, and the family descends from wealth to relative poverty. Mrs. March indicates her feelings about the family's downturn: "I had four little daughters around me, and we were poor, then the old trouble [anger] began again; for I am not patient by nature, and it tried me very much to see my children wanting anything" (Alcott 80). In the family's financial crisis, as well, Jo seems compelled to be the provider since her father proves ineffectual. Her writing earns money to pay the family's bills.

Montgomery creates the most anxiety around family by showing the vulnerability of children in the family. Anne is an orphan who is being taken in by a brother and a sister, certainly not a typical family, although based on the nuclear family model. The anxiety about family is a central focus of the first few chapters in which Anne worries that she might not be kept by the Cuthberts: she is, after all, not a boy. Marilla has insisted that she will send Anne back to the orphanage. Anne promises Marilla, "I'll try to do and be anything you want me, if you'll only keep me" (Montgomery 47). When Marilla tells Anne that she may stay at Green Gables, she suggests that it is a conditional arrangement: "Matthew and I have decided to keep you-- that is, if you will try to be a good little girl and show yourself grateful" (Montgomery 54). This conditional acceptance does not alleviate the anxiety around becoming a family member; rather, it highlights the fact that any wrongdoing on Anne's part might result in her speedy return to the orphanage. Montgomery presents an abnormal situation--siblings adopting a child--that reflects the traditional nuclear family paradigm of mother, father, child: her text emphasizes the constructedness of family by showing that any group of people can resemble a family, and it also explicitly stresses the damaging conditional acceptance that is often an implicit code in family life.

"Othering" and the constructed family

Each text also suggests the extent to which family ideology, while called into

crisis, is relatively inescapable, by exposing the kinship, classist, racist, and nationalist mentality which can shut individuals out of the family. As Barrett and McIntosh have pointed out, this debarment of different groups also operates to imprison members of the group within strictly defined limits. While family can be a source of identity, this same identity can trap individuals within a certain role. In all three novels, a sense of suspicion and distrust of other ethnic groups, races, and classes strengthens family bonds and clearly delineates the boundary between family and other, imprisoning the individual within the family structure. In addition, continually identifying non-members further illustrates the tremendous anxiety over family boundaries: family members constantly need to re-affirm and re-construct their family allegiance by noting difference. The continual re-articulation of family boundaries, then, allows a space for negotiation, for change. If the family is always in the process of being defined, then it is also always open to change.

In The Daisy Chain, race, class, and kinship identities function to demarcate the Mays as a family. The clear distinction between the Christian world of the Mays and the “uncivilized” natives of the colonies, manifest in the family’s missionary zeal, points to the construction of difference and suggests the anxiety of family members who resist change to the family structure. Tom, in particular, voices unchecked racism when he laments Norman’s departure for New Zealand: “Why should he go and set his heart on those black savages?” he cries (Yonge 532); “They are niggers altogether,” he reiterates (Yonge 532). George Rivers, Flora’s husband, also registers his sentiment about Norman’s choice: “It was a regular shame to waste him on the niggers” (Yonge 572). The natives of New Zealand are cast as beyond the sphere of the May family, as so different that family members cannot see the point of spending one’s life among them. The point of Norman’s missionary work is to make the New Zealand natives Christian, and thus more like the Mays.

Difference can be elided, however, between the inhabitants of the colonies and

the Mays when familial images are invoked, suggesting that the construction of family can be altered. Even an apparently insurmountable difference, like race, can be overcome. Ethel explains her aunt's missionary efforts in New Zealand: Aunt Flora teaches "the Maori women and girls. They call her mother, and she has quite a doctor's shop for them, and tries hard to teach them to take proper care of their poor little children" (Yonge 251). These Maori have become Christian, of course, so their differences are lessened and, if they see Aunt Flora in a maternal role, they can be tolerated to a degree. Similarly, Dr. Spencer's experiences in India take on a positive note when couched in the language of family: "Dr. Spencer had, in fact, never rested till he had established a mission in his former remote station; and his brown godson, once a Brahmin, now an exemplary clergyman, traced his conversion to the friendship and example of the English physician" (Yonge 406).

Class is also an important distinction in shutting out certain types of people. The Mays boast an upper middle-class social status. Flora explains their social position to Ethel: "Dr. May is the man most looked up to in the town." She adds, "we have the prestige of better birth, and better education, as well as having the chief property in the town, and of being the largest subscribers, added to his personal character . . . so that everything conspires to render us leaders"(337). Their social standing causes them to regard the impoverished town of Cocks Moor with its "set of wild people" and lawlessness (Yonge 2, 3) as clearly beneath them. It is, however, worthy of their attempts to transform it, thus lessening the perceived differences. When Norman, the son who becomes a missionary in New Zealand, visits Ethel's school in Cocks Moor, he is horrified: "The stifling den, the uncouth aspect of the children, the head girl so very ragged a specimen, thoroughly revolted his somewhat fastidious disposition" (Yonge 184). He encourages his father to put a stop to Ethel's mission work by speaking of his "intense disgust" and making "a most formidable description of Ethel's black-hole" (Yonge 187). He labels the children "dirty brats" (Yonge 187).

While the Mays condescend to help out Cocks Moor, even while reviling it, they too are judged harshly for their social standing. When Meta tells her aunt, Lady Leonora, about her friends the Miss Mays, lady Leonora responds with thinly-veiled dismay: "Physician's daughters; oh!" (Yonge 221). She insists that Meta's father bring his daughter to London "where she might have masters, and be in the way of forming intimacies suited to her connections" (Yonge 221). Lady Leonora feels that the Mays are not people of the right calibre for her niece, although Flora and the doctor manage to impress her somewhat.

Kinship also works to contain family members in a tight-knit circle while prohibiting families without certain perceived standards. The Andersons in The Daisy Chain illuminate the extent to which kinship determines behaviour. Harvey Anderson, the eldest brother, plots to have Norman deposed from his position as head boy in the school, so it will fall to himself. He incites a riot in the boys but does not attend it himself. Appearances suggest that Norman masterminded the mischief, so he is dethroned and Harvey takes his place and the Randall scholarship. Harvey and his brother, Ned, are described by Harry as "a horrid, sneaking, mean-spirited pair" (Yonge 225) and Dr. May admits that "to Ethel, especially, it is a struggle to be in charity with the Andersons" (Yonge 225). The Andersons are portrayed as antithetical to the Mays. While Harvey is undeserving of the Randall scholarship, Norman is deserving. When a word from the younger Anderson, Edward, could have absolved the wrongly-charged Norman, he holds his tongue. After Edward himself is expelled from school as punishment for a misdemeanour he did commit, Dr. May petitions the principal to let him back in. The flaws in the Andersons highlight all that is good in the Mays.

On the other hand, kinship relations can be expanded to include outsiders into the fold, indicating that family structure is open to change. Meta Rivers becomes a surrogate sister to the Mays, which is legalized when she marries Norman May. Alan

Ernescliffe feels filial love towards Dr. May: “Alan knew that if he died, he should leave his little brother in the hands of one who would comfort him as a father” (Yonge 9). This filial role is legitimized when he becomes engaged to Margaret.

In Little Women, the demarcation between family and “other” falls along the lines of nationalism, class, and kinship. National identity reverberates throughout the text, calling into question groups of individuals who do not have a distinctly American identity. From Laurie’s Italian mother whose nationality caused a rift between Laurie’s grandfather and father, to the little Irish street children whom Amy and her friends despise, nationality seems an excuse for exclusion and class difference in the novel.⁵ Most insistent are the repeated images of impoverished Germans. The March girls take their Christmas breakfast to the Hummels, a poor German family, and are rewarded first by being labelled angels by the Hummels and second by an elaborate luncheon provided by Mr. Laurence who heard of their good deed. A patronizing tone infiltrates the text as the girls try to understand the “funny broken English” of the German children (Alcott 15). The Hummels become a convenient repository for the Marches’ excesses and disasters. When Amy’s party fails to produce party-goers, Amy decides to send the food off: “Bundle everything into a basket, and send it to the Hummels-- Germans like messes” (Alcott 264). Likewise, when newly-married Meg concocts a culinary disaster, “Lotty would be privately despatched with a batch of failures which were to be concealed from all eyes, in the convenient stomachs of the little Hummels” (Alcott 274). The Hummels are also the cause of Beth’s bout with scarlet fever which significantly weakens her health and ultimately leads to her death. As the self-sacrificing sister, Beth consistently visits the Hummels while their baby is ill and contracts the illness herself. The image of the lower-class immigrant appears in Professor Bhaer, as well, as he is described as “a regular German”: “rather stout” with “messy hair, “

a bushy beard, droll nose, the kindest eyes I every saw, and a splendid big

voice that does one's ears good, after our sharp or slipshod American gabble.

His clothes were rusty, his hands were large, and he hadn't a handsome feature in his face, except his beautiful teeth. (Alcott 335)

Jo also states in a letter home, "I wish Americans were as simple and natural as Germans, don't you?" (Alcott 339). The stereotype of Germans seems clear: they are poor, not necessarily attractive or complicated people, who care little for grooming but much for eating.

While Alcott presents Germans in a somewhat unflattering light, she holds up German culture as representing sophistication, but in so doing presents it as distinctly different from American. When Laurie admires Meg, he says: "She makes me think of the German girls, she looks so fresh and quiet, and dances like a lady" (Alcott 28). At the same party, Laurie demonstrates his worldliness by teaching Jo the German step and recounting his adventures in Heidelberg (Alcott 30). When Miss Kate, a visiting Briton, discovers that Meg does not read German well, she is very surprised (Alcott 133). Brooke offers to teach Meg German, as Professor Bhaer does later with Jo, making German the language of love in the novel. Because giving to Germans has signified self-sacrifice--relinquishing Christmas breakfast, Beth's illness and subsequent death-- a disturbing connection is made when German becomes a metaphor for love. Love equals dangerous self-sacrifice. That Alcott couches this warning in a foreign culture suggests that the foreign is dangerous and not to be trusted. That German is the language of love, of connection and intimacy, also indicates that the foreign can be integrated and accepted.

The March family also have close kinship connections that determine who is included and who is excluded from the family circle, showing the continual anxiety over family membership and indicating that the definition of family can be altered. Acceptance of someone into the family circle is conditional. When Jo lectures Laurie for his wild ways, she compares him to Ned Moffat and his group of friends: "Mother

won't let us have him at our house, though he wants to come" (Alcott 149). Like the Andersons in The Daisy Chain, the Moffats are depicted as not very admirable. Mrs. Moffat proves to be a superficial gossip when Meg overhears her at a party discussing Mrs. March's designs for her girls (Alcott 87). Meg recognizes the family as "frivolous," and "not particularly cultivated or intelligent people," for all their fashion and wealth (Alcott 85). However, the family definition can be expanded to include acceptable others. Laurie is accepted into the family as Meg points out: "You are so kind to us, we feel as if you were our brother" (Alcott 146). His grandfather, Mr. Laurence, becomes a surrogate father to the girls, standing in for the absentee Mr. March.

Like Alcott, Montgomery creates anxiety around family boundaries through nationalist and kinship identities. Patriotism plays a stronger role in Anne of Green Gables than in the other two novels. A sense of nationalism justifies certain potentially unacceptable behavior. For example, the young Avonlea scholars hold a concert in order to acquire a schoolhouse flag. Marilla is disapproving and Anne tries to convince her of the validity of the project: "a flag will cultivate a spirit of patriotism, Marilla" (Montgomery 192). Anne desperately wants to participate in the concert so she uses the discourse of patriotism to sell the idea to Marilla. Likewise, national identity forms an integral part of Marilla's defense of the Cuthberts' decision to adopt an orphan. Rachel Lynde thinks that Marilla is putting herself at risk and Marilla defends herself by explaining that Matthew wanted to get a "Barnardo boy," a "London street Arab"⁶ but that she insisted upon "a born Canadian" (Montgomery 6). She tells Rachel, "it isn't as if we were getting him from England or the States. He can't be much different from ourselves" (Montgomery 7). Anne's difference is decreased, she is made more acceptable, by her nationality. However, even amongst 'born' Canadians, Marilla makes fine distinctions. The Cuthberts are adopting an orphan to help Matthew around the farm because they have difficulty hiring help: "There's never anybody to be had but

those stupid, half-grown little French boys” (Montgomery 6). After the Cuthberts decide to keep Anne, an orphan of the wrong sex, Matthew does hire a French boy, Jerry Buote. Like the Hummels in Little Women, Jerry is regarded as something akin to a garbage disposal. When Anne produces an inedible cake, Marilla orders her to feed it to the pigs. She adds, “it isn’t fit for any human to eat, not even Jerry Buote” (Montgomery 177). French Canadians are, most likely, as native born as the Cuthberts; however, their linguistic difference subordinates them in Marilla’s mind and this difference brings Anne into the family circle.

Other nationalities fare no better. Marilla makes a startling assumption about an individual’s identity when Anne confesses to buying hair dye from a peddler. Marilla responds with annoyance, “I told you never to let one of those Italians in the house! I don’t believe in encouraging them to come around at all” (Montgomery 217). Anne says, as if to redeem herself, “he wasn’t an Italian--he was a German Jew” (Montgomery 217). The interloper, the person who causes the problem, like Anne in not being a boy or the peddler, is inevitably not of the same make as the Avonlea folk, is from “away,” or speaks a different language. And, while Anne now has a very perceptible difference by sporting green hair, her difference remains less than the peddler’s.

Even within Avonlea, kinship boundaries clearly hold certain people together to the exclusion of others. Like Yonge and Alcott, Montgomery presents a family who does not boast many admirable traits. Josie Pye, “deficient in some qualities that make for popularity,” is Anne’s rival (Montgomery 184). Anne explains her feelings: “I simply can’t talk about Josie Pye without making an uncharitable speech, so I never mention her at all” (Montgomery 207). After dying her hair green, Anne’s foremost thought is of how Josie Pye will laugh (Montgomery 218). Josie dares Anne to walk the ridgepole, an act which causes Anne to break her ankle. Like the peddler, the unaccepted character causes the problems. Josie is unacceptable because of her family

connections. As Diana explains to Anne shortly after the beginning of school: “Those Pye girls are cheats all around” (Montgomery 110). The exclusion of Josie, furthermore, brings Anne and Diana closer together. The continual need to locate and articulate the tightknit family’s difference from perceived outsiders suggests the anxiety which accompanies inclusion in the group. As well, the constant re-articulation of the connection conveys the message that families are not a biological given but are instead culturally created. Thus, they can also be re-visioned and changed.

Contradiction in family life

As Barrett and McIntosh suggest, finding connection and solace within family may be rewarding for individuals, but it may also prove unfulfilling and damaging. Like Eliot, Chopin, and Duncan, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery do not propose that adjusting to family life is easy or natural for their heroines; rather, they highlight the contradictions involved in family. The family can be the source of abuse and oppression. By both necessarily exalting the family as the only option for survival and calling it into question, these stories indicate that the heroines must learn negotiation in order to survive within potentially oppressive circumstances.

The Daisy Chain exposes the contradiction of family life by presenting the May household as both oppressive and supportive. The comfort and peace to which the Mays are accustomed in the evenings speaks to a loving and nurturing environment:

That was wont to be the merriest part of the whole day, the whole family collected, papa at leisure and ready for talk or play, mama singing over her work-basket, the sisters full of chatter, the brothers full of fun, all the tidings of the day discussed, and nothing unwelcome but bedtime. (Yonge 43)

The feelings of the family transcend choice or common interests. The Mays appreciate each other because they are blood related. Ethel and Richard, for example, have very little in common. Yet when they walk together to Cocks Moor, “there was a good deal

of that desultory talk, very sociable and interesting, that is apt to prevail between two people, who would never have chosen each other for companions, if they were not of the same family” (Yonge 48). The bonds of family extend to the larger community as well. The citizens of Stoneborough, the May’s town, recognize how important Richard’s presence is to the family, now that the mother has died. They select Richard for their vicar because “they thought [the May family] might like to have him settled near” (Yonge 449). Dr. May cannot allow this generosity and declares Richard too young for the position. Instead, Mr. Wilmot, the successful candidate, solves the problem by hiring Richard as curate for Cocks Moor, Richard’s pet project all along. The community, like the family, looks out for its members and fulfills a very supportive role.

Dr. May, too, symbolizes love and support in the novel. Ethel pledges her duty to her family and her father several times. She exclaims to Norman: “I will never let papa or any of you be second to any one” (Yonge 283). Later she repeats this sentiment when Flora marries George Rivers and Ethel witnesses her father’s pain: “In her heart of hearts she passed the resolution--that her father should never feel this pain on her account. Leave him who might, she would never forsake him” (Yonge 350). The biblical language makes clear that Dr. May is in a position resembling a god in the household. This loving feeling towards family members manifests itself in Harry May, as well, when he approaches his father for permission to be a sailor:

There was the thrill of intense, burning love to his father . . . a clinging feeling to every chair and table of that room, which seemed still full of his mother’s presence; a numbering over of all the others with ardent attachment, and a flinging from him with horror the notion of asking to be far away from that dearest father, that loving home, the arm that was around him. (Yonge 84)

This very image of the all-loving father is undermined, however, by the presentation of Dr. May as unpredictable and tyrannical. In his character, the

precarious power of patriarchy looms large: the whole family must collude with his will--indeed they must anticipate his shortcomings and cover for him--in order for his power to be uncontested and his temper contained. The character of Dr. May vibrates with potential violence and temper. Through his carelessness in driving the carriage, he kills his wife and maims his daughter, which leads to her death as well. This is a potent image of patriarchal power gone awry. His authority over the family is not to be tampered with, however uncontrolled it may be. When the older children attempt to handle young Tom's school problems themselves and keep the problems secret from the doctor, they are destined to failure. The secret comes out, Dr. May is distressed that they did not confide in him, Tom is punished with a flogging, and the older children admit that they did wrong in trying to govern by themselves. Richard says: "My father always is right in the main, though he is apt to frighten one at first, and it is what ought to be, that he should rule his own house" (Yonge 177). Patriarchal power, while frightening and potentially violent, should not be questioned.

Futhermore, Dr. May's children seem justifiably frightened of him. Harry and Margaret acknowledge that "Dr. May's way of hearing of a fault was never to be calculated on" (Yonge 83). The eldest son, Richard, feels anguish because he believes that he was "incapable of being anything but a vexation and burthen" to his father (Yonge 32). The pressure Richard feels from Dr. May causes him to fail exams and not perform as he believes he should. Ethel sees Richard's impotence when she points out, Richard is "so very much afraid of papa" (Yonge 78). Fear of papa is an emotion Ethel understands as she seems to be the butt of much of Dr. May's anger, frustration, and unpredictability. When Ethel does not seem able to care for Margaret properly, Dr. May vents his anger upon her: "he could not restrain [his displeasure], and continued to blame Ethel with enough of injustice to set her on vindication" (Yonge 62). Yonge's narrator takes care to point out that Dr. May's response to Ethel is unjust. He blames Ethel any time his abilities as a father are threatened. When Norman

collapses with nerves after his mother's death, Dr. May places the blame on Ethel, even while disavowing that he has done so: "I'm not blaming you, Ethel, you knew no better, but it has been grievous neglect. It is plain enough there is no one to see after you" (Yonge 99). Rather than admit his own neglect of Norman, Dr. May finds fault with his daughter. When Ethel's inattention results in Aubrey's lighting himself on fire, the doctor loses his temper again. The masochistic language of the passage describing Ethel's state of mind shows the extent to which Ethel is a victim of her father's emotions: "Ethel was too much terrified to know where she was, or anything, but that she had let her little brother run into fearful peril, and grievously angered her father; she was afraid to follow him, and stood still, annihilated" (Yonge 123). Ethel justifies her father's anger, furthermore, by making herself believe that it is for her own good. She says to Richard, when he and Margaret are discussing Dr. May's unreasonable temper, "I'm sure papa was never angry with me, without making me love him more" (Yonge 141-42). Richard replies: "You're a girl," as if her gender explains her willingness to love the hand that oppresses her (Yonge 142)). His response also suggests that he, as a boy, does not feel the way Ethel does. Dr. May's anger does not make Richard love him more.

The family containment which provides security and comfort for the Mays can easily slip into a sense of injustice or imprisonment. Even the title of the novel, taken from Dr. May's pet name for his children, has an ambiguous meaning. While a daisy chain is a pretty necklace made by linking flowers together, the word 'chain' implies bonds that can also be imprisoning. Certainly, Margaret May feels the duty and propriety which restrain her to be a burden. When she wishes to go to Cocksmoor with Ethel and Alan Ernescliffe, her governess quickly conveys the message that it would be inappropriate. Margaret stays home but whispers to her baby sister: "Lucky baby, to have so many years to come before you are plagued with troublesome propriety" (Yonge 5). This anxiety around propriety with which Yonge opens her

novel leads to Margaret taking the carriage, the carriage accident, Margaret's incapacity, and ultimately her death. Propriety, in Yonge's eyes, may not always provide positive limitations. Ethel, too, feels chafed by propriety when she is not allowed to attend her baby sister's christening because it occurs too soon after her mother's death to be proper: "Ethel wished [to go] very much, and thought it nonsense to care whether people looked at her; and in spite of Miss Winter's seeming shocked at her proposing it, had a great mind to persist" (Yonge 35). The sense of propriety, the concern about what people will think, constrains the movements of the May family, even getting in the way of religious rituals.

Perhaps the battle over Ethel's eyeglasses shows most acutely how family opinion takes precedence over individual need. Ethel is painfully short-sighted but her mother does not want her to wear glasses. Her family believes that she will be a spectacle herself if she wears them. Harry threatens not to go to Cocks Moor with her, "if you choose to make yourself such an object" (Yonge 14). When Richard wonders why she does not wear glasses, she replies: "Dear mother did not like me to use them" (Yonge 49). Without glasses, however, Ethel makes just as much a spectacle of herself by wrinkling her face up in an effort to see. Flora lectures her on how to behave for a party: "Don't frown when you are trying to see" (Yonge 191). Alan Ernescliffe attempts to reconcile the demands on Ethel by sending her an eye-glass and chain, "which, it was hoped, might cure her of frowning and stooping" (Yonge 275). It has the additional effect, however, of encouraging teasing by Flora and Norman that almost succeeds in making Ethel put it away. The debate over whether to allow Ethel sight or not is metaphorical. In order to be able to see fully, to have the resources of the world fully before her, Ethel would become an object of ridicule in the community, a spectacle like that of the "learned lady" which Norman says is "bad" (Yonge 164). The family would rather limit Ethel's abilities than subject themselves to community censure.

Like The Daisy Chain, Little Women presents a glorified image of the family

which is undercut by a conflicting image of the family as potentially oppressive. At the end of the novel, Jo exclaims: "I do think that families are the most beautiful things in all the world" (Alcott 484). This sentiment informs much of the novel and extends to the community as well. A sense of personal interdependence predominates, particularly when Marmee allows the girls to take a vacation from their chores. Disaster ensues as the girls are discontented, home life is not comfortable, and Pip the pet bird dies from neglect. Marmee offers up the moral: "I wanted you to see how the comfort of all depends on each doing their share faithfully. . . . I thought, as a lesson, I would show you what happens when everyone thinks only of herself" (Alcott 117). She is not telling them to be solely self-sacrificing and, indeed, warns against that position: "Don't go to the other extreme, and delve like slaves" (Alcott 118). She wants her daughters to find a happy balance between work and play, self and other.

Without a doubt, positive images of family life dominate Little Women. The father, while mostly an absentee patriarchal figure, is described in glowing terms after his return from the war. The description asserts the primacy of his patriarchal authority over the group of women who seem to be the actors: "To outsiders, the five energetic women seemed to rule the house, and so they did in many things; but the quiet man sitting among his books was still head of the family, the household conscience, anchor and comforter" (Alcott 237). That Mr. March's patriarchal position needs to be asserted shows how precarious his position is. It is not simply understood or assumed, but needs to be consciously constructed. Like Dr. May's, Mr. March's patriarchal authority needs to be made explicit for the reader to recognize it at all. He is a benevolent patriarch. Marmee explains to Meg, when Meg is having marital problems, the secret to the Marches' marital happiness: "each do our part alone in many things, but at home we work together, always" (Alcott 392). A model of egalitarianism is constructed for Meg to follow. When Meg allows Brooke to involve himself in childcare and domestic concerns, "everyone was better for the division of labor system"

(Alcott 399). In theory, the family is a sacred place where everyone is equal and can rely on others. Meg counsels Laurie to stay with his grandfather and make him proud. Laurie resolves to do so, realizing “I am all he has” (Alcott 146).

The community in Little Women also extends a supportive and nurturing hand. Mr. March lost his money by “trying to help out an unfortunate friend,” for example (Alcott 36). Others, like Mr. Laurence, extend themselves to the Marches in response. When the girls relinquish their Christmas breakfast to the Hummels, Mr. Laurence sends them an elaborate Christmas lunch. When Mr. March loses his money, Aunt March wants to adopt one of his children. While the parents will not consent to giving up a child, Aunt March compromises somewhat by hiring Jo as her companion.

While family life is the overwhelmingly positive focus of the novel, like The Daisy Chain, potentially violent and destructive impulses linger at the edges, belying the happy, egalitarian messages. Veronica Bassil states: “Anger, sorrow, and destruction lurk behind Alcott’s domestic surface” (Bassil 193). Fathers and husbands, while portrayed as benevolent and just, are also depicted as inadequate, tyrannical, and angry. Mr. March’s financial woes spiral him and his family into poverty. Meg complains: “I’m poor, and can’t enjoy my life as other girls do” (Alcott 35). Even the source of patience and love, Marmee, admits to intense anger at their economic status. She overcomes her anger with her husband’s assistance. He silences her. Jo describes his behaviour: “I used to see father sometimes put his finger on his lips, and look at you with a very kind, but sober face; and you always folded your lips tight, or went away” (Alcott 81). He puts limits on Marmee’s emotions by not allowing her to vent her anger.

An overtly tyrannical patriarchal figure appears in Jo’s Christmas play. Don Pedro is the cruel father who will allow his daughter to marry only a wealthy man. The young lovers are not able to bend Don Pedro to their will; rather, a bag of money appears for the pair, and thus Don Pedro consents to the marriage. He is not flexible.

Jo must manipulate the script around his wishes so that the couple can be together. This patriarchal rigidity and Jo's textual negotiations in order to achieve the desired ending act as a metaphor for the negotiation Jo must accomplish in her everyday life.

Perhaps most distressing is Brooke's potential for anger and cruelty. Meg, very unhappy in her married life, does not want to turn to her mother for aid because Brooke "might be cruel, but nobody should know it" (Alcott 278). Alcott defuses the tension around Brooke's cruelty to Meg by putting this statement in quotation marks. These are Meg's thoughts and not to be taken too seriously. However, the inclusion of these words calls Brooke's manner into question. Marmee further casts doubt on Brooke's kindness by discussing his anger with Meg: "He has a temper, not like ours,--one flash, and then all over--but the white still anger that is seldom stirred, but once kindled, is hard to quench. Be careful, very careful, not to wake this anger against yourself" (Alcott 279). The entreaties to guard against rousing this anger are most disturbing. Meg is held captive by fear of her husband's temper. Patriarchal figures, then, are not always benevolent and kind. One must work diligently to keep them that way. Other family members display this potential for violence and destruction as well. Even loving Marmee seems to counsel her daughters to follow questionable dictates, by encouraging Meg to pander to her husband's moods, for example. Amy demonstrates a destructive streak when she burns Jo's manuscript. Beth, too, tries to control Jo's behaviour by exacting the promise that Jo will fill Beth's place, give up writing, and look after their parents.

A commitment to community, while portrayed as nurturing, also means fulfilling social obligations. Pip, the pet bird who dies of neglect, is a potent image of the vulnerability of community members who depend too much on others. Pip's demise also suggests the potentially destructive outcome if one does not fulfill one's social responsibilities, even if it is simply feeding a pet bird. Amy feels the burden of social obligation when she must reciprocate the pickled limes she receives as treats from

the other girls. She must ask Meg for money to purchase the limes, she faces anxiety in bringing the forbidden limes into the classroom, and she must endure punishment when the limes are discovered. Jo, too, feels the burden of community pressure when she must go visiting, a chore she despises. She acknowledges to Amy: "It's a debt we owe society, and there's no one to pay it but you and me" (Alcott 288). Amy tries to reassure her: "I want people to like you, and they would if you'd only try to be a little more agreeable" (Alcott 288). Jo understands that her community will only like her if she panders to their idiosyncracies. Amy says she will tell Jo "how to behave at each place" and the expected behaviour for each household is different (Alcott 288). The implication that Jo must not be herself and must instead accommodate herself to each individual home suggests that Jo's personality is unacceptable as it is. The community at large, like the patriarchs, has to be manipulated into remaining happy and benevolent.

Montgomery, more than the other two writers, uncovers the potential for violence and oppression that is inherent in exclusionary family politics. However, she, like the other two novelists, portrays home life as ostensibly rewarding and nurturing. More than anything, Anne wishes to be accepted at Green Gables. After imagining herself as the Lady Cordelia Fitzgerald, Anne glances in the mirror. "You're only Anne of Green Gables," she says to herself and adds, "but it's a million times nicer to be Anne of Green Gables than Anne of nowhere in particular" (Montgomery 60). Having a sense of home is of paramount importance to Anne. She tells Marilla that she had a wonderful visit with Diana's aunt in Charlottetown. "But," she says, "the best of it all was the coming home" (Montgomery 23).

Matthew, like Dr. May and Mr. March, is a benevolent patriarchal figure and Anne's chief support. Anne defends him against Marilla's disgust: "he's so very sympathetic. He didn't mind how much I talked—he seemed to like it. I felt that he was a kindred spirit as soon as ever I saw him" (Montgomery 33). Matthew is a kindred spirit of Anne's. He recognizes, after seeing Anne with a cluster of girls, that

her clothes are inadequate and sets about to get her the much-coveted dress with puffed sleeves. He quickly intervenes in order to convince Anne to apologize to Mrs. Lynde. He keeps a close eye on Anne, even though he has sworn to Marilla that he would not get involved in her upbringing. Matthew is, however, the only wholly benevolent force in Anne's life.

To a greater degree than Yonge and Alcott, Montgomery stresses the vulnerability of a child and the potentially oppressive circumstances in which she can find herself. Anne's history testifies to the powerless position a child occupies. Anne's parents, described as "a pair of babies and as poor as church mice," were school teachers who died of fever within days of each other when Anne was an infant. Mrs. Thomas, an abusive woman who told Anne she was "the homeliest baby she ever saw," takes her in because no one else wants her (Montgomery 39). Mr. Thomas is an alcoholic and their household is impoverished. Anne must help to look after the four Thomas children who are younger than she. When Mr. Thomas is killed by a train, Mrs. Hammond takes Anne to help care for her eight children. Mr. Hammond dies and Anne is sent to the orphanage. When asked by Marilla whether the women were good to her, Anne has difficulty answering, which suggests that her answer is not as honest as it could be: "'O-o-o-h,' faltered Anne. . . . 'Oh, they *meant* to be—I know they meant to be as good and kind as possible'" (Montgomery 41). Anne's history of being unwanted and exploited for her labour shows how powerless and vulnerable children can be within the family.

Moreover, Montgomery's text ripples with the potential for oppression beyond what Anne has already endured. Mrs. Lynde thinks about the unadopted orphan that Marilla is adopting. "Well, I'm sorry for that poor young one and no mistake," she exclaims after leaving Green Gables. "It seems uncanny to think of a child at Green Gables somehow," she adds. Her pity is reiterated when she further states: "I wouldn't be in that orphan's shoes for anything. My, but I pity him, that's what" (Montgomery

8). Mrs. Lynde calls into question the Cuthberts' ability to raise children, highlighting the vulnerability of the child placed in their home by chance. The tension around the unfortunate child who will be placed in their home is heightened. Indeed, Marilla proves a difficult parent. Anne "sometimes thought wistfully that Marilla was very hard to please and distinctly lacking in sympathy and understanding" (Montgomery 239). The potential for Anne landing in yet another exploitive situation arises when Mrs. Blewitt shows interest in adopting the unwanted girl. Mrs. Blewitt appraises Anne as if she were a workhorse because she is motivated to adopt an orphan for childcare labour. As if Marilla saw into the heart of her own self-serving reasons for adopting a child--to work the farm with Matthew--she refuses to turn Anne over. Regardless of the text's happy resolution to Anne's vulnerable situation, the potential for exploitative use of children is emphasized in Anne of Green Gables. Mrs. Lynde's notion of child-rearing also points to the abusive potential in parent-child relationships. After Anne has lost her temper with her, Mrs. Lynde declares: "if you'll take my advice--which I suppose you won't do, although I've brought up ten children and buried two--you'll do that 'talking to' you mention with a fair-sized birch switch" (Montgomery 66). Fortunately, Marilla does not follow Mrs. Lynde's advice; however, by including Mrs. Lynde's ideas about proper punishment, Montgomery reveals the potential for violence and oppression within the home.

The overblown romantic language often used by Anne and the narrator also underscores the potential for oppression or degradation in family life. The description of Anne's room suggests the coldness of the environment Anne wishes to call home. "The whitewashed walls were so painfully bare and staring that she thought they must ache over their own bareness. The floor was bare, too"(Montgomery 27). The repetition of the word "bare" suggests how exposed Anne is to mistreatment or misconduct. It also emphasizes the severity of her surroundings: "The whole apartment was of a rigidity not to be described in words, but which sent a shiver to the very

marrow of Anne's bones" (Montgomery 27). Anne is still not in a warm, nurturing environment. When Marilla sends Anne to her room until she apologizes to Mrs. Lynde, Anne's grand romantic phrases nod to the kind of oppression Anne feels: "You can shut me up in a dark, damp dungeon inhabited by snakes and toads and feed me only on bread and water and I shall not complain" (Montgomery 68). The statement has two effects. First, it is humorous because Anne is actually quite safe and comfortable at Green Gables. Through irony, this statement shows that Anne is in a nurturing situation. Second, it indicates the potential for maltreatment: Anne could be the victim of any punishment Marilla chooses to inflict. During her apology to Mrs. Lynde, moreover, "Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation--was reveling in the thoroughness of her abasement" (Montgomery 74). This masochistic pleasure in her unjust circumstances, points to Anne's powerlessness. Unless she wants to face that overwhelming sense of vulnerability, Anne has no choice but to turn this task to pleasure. Likewise, Anne uses a grand phrase in swearing to Marilla that she did not steal Marilla's amethyst brooch: "I never took the brooch out of your room and that is the truth, if I was to be led to the block for it" (Montgomery 97). Again, through overstatement, Anne acknowledges her position. Any punishment may be dealt to her and, guilty or not, she would have no recourse. She eventually confesses to the crime, although innocent, because she is not believed anyway.

Agency in accommodation

All three writers show the ultimate paradox of family life. While it can be rewarding and nurturing, it can also be oppressive and punitive. As Barrett and McIntosh suggest, the all-pervasive quality of familial ideology leaves no other options for living outside of the family. Indeed, in these three novels, alternatives to family and community life--having the means to live independently, for example--are not particularly attractive. Meta Rivers, in The Daisy Chain, is independently wealthy and,

after her father dies, is beholden to no one. Instead of feeling empowered by her autonomy, Meta feels lonely and lacking in purpose. Margaret tells Norman: “Meta owned to Ethel that what had been worst of all to her was the heart sinking at finding herself able to choose her occupations, with no one to accommodate them to” (Yonge 432). In the orphan, Hector Ernescliffe, Yonge also presents a wealthy young person who may choose his own path in life. Instead, he wishes for a family connection. When he discovers that Dr. May is his guardian, he is overjoyed (Yonge 487). Both Meta and Hector, through friendship and then marriage to a May child, find happiness by becoming part of the May family.

Alcott explores the alternatives to family and community living to a greater degree than the other two writers. She shows, through the character of Laurie, how lonely life is without enough social contact. Laurie is kept cloistered in his large house by his grandfather, his only family. He pines for family life. He secretly follows the March sisters into the woods where they are working: “A shadow passed over the boy’s face as he watched them, feeling that he ought to go, because uninvited; yet lingering, because home seemed so very lonely” (Alcott 139). He wishes to have the kind of closeness and connection that the March family has. Jo, on the other hand, wishes for greater independence from family and community bonds. Amy rails at her: “*You* can go through the world with your elbows out and your nose in the air, and call it independence, if you like. That’s not my way” (Alcott 259). The narrator agrees that “Jo carried her love of liberty and hate of conventionalities to such an unlimited extent” (Alcott 260). Jo herself says to her Aunt March: “I don’t like favors; they oppress and make me feel like a slave; I’d rather do everything for myself, and be perfectly independent” (Alcott 297). This declaration costs Jo a trip to Europe, as the more amiable Amy is asked instead. As Marmee tells Jo, Aunt March “regretted your blunt manners and too independent spirit” and, while she planned to ask Jo, did not want to oppress her with a favour. Jo’s independence is bred from the luxury of feeling solidly

accepted in a family, where Laurie does not know that feeling and desires it. Jo's extreme sense of independence does not serve her well. When she falls in love with Professor Bhaer, her commitment to her liberty complicates matters: "Jo couldn't even lose her heart in a decorous manner, but sternly tried to quench her feelings; and, failing to do so, led a somewhat agitated life. She was mortally afraid of being laughed at for surrendering, after her many and vehement declarations of independence" (Alcott 468). Jo's vision of her future as an independent, self-sufficient, literary spinster, moreover, is "not inviting" (Alcott 440). The narrator's lecture on spinsters shows that this solitary life is no escape from the imprisoning bonds of family and community. The narrator counsels girls not to laugh at spinsters, indicating that many girls do. She admonishes gentlemen to be courteous which suggests that many are not. Single life for women does not command respect from others. It is not presented as a viable alternative to family life.

Montgomery's exploration of life outside family bonds is limited to Anne's history of being unwanted, unloved, and handed from home to home. In the face of that uncertainty and lack of love, family life is worth almost any cost to Anne. Like Little Women, Anne of Green Gables asserts that alternatives to family life are unappealing. For example, the wealthy old maid, Miss Barry, is independent, crotchety, and assertive. However, she realizes what she has missed after Anne and Diana visit her. She watches the girls leave, "then she went back into her big house with a sigh. It seemed lonely, lacking those young fresh lives. Miss Barry was a rather selfish old lady, if the truth be told, and had never cared much for anybody but herself" (Montgomery 236). As Miss Barry stands alone in her luxurious house, she admits: "If I'd a child like Anne in the house all the time I'd be a better and happier woman" (Montgomery 236). Solace and companionship can only be found in the embrace of a loving family, the text seems to say.

Arguably, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery may be regarded as espousing the

view that independence in women is neither desired nor rewarded. They seem to say that young girls need to accommodate themselves to potentially oppressive community pressure, an accommodation that most certainly benefits others. The message that young girls must conform to the world around them may not be liberating for the heroines, or the reader. However, each text also underscores the heroine's agency: because each novel engages with the lack of options outside family and exposes the all-pervasive familial ideology, the focus shifts to the heroine's negotiations within this limited sphere. By introducing readers to families in crisis and by portraying extreme anxiety over what constitutes the family through characters' constant re-articulation of family boundaries and definitions, these novels gesture towards the constructedness of the central organizing unit of their heroines' lives. In continuously re-stating and re-defining the family, the books suggest that the heroines can negotiate the seemingly-rigid definitions, expanding the family to include Laurie in Little Women, for example. The texts clear a space for alteration, re-definition, and negotiation.

Further expressing the girls' agency, the texts do not elide the potential for violence and oppression that lurks within the walls of the home. While the potential abusiveness communicates the heroine's relative powerlessness and lack of choice, it also salutes her ability to negotiate the powerful forces at play. Instead of alienating their community and family, like the heroines in The Mill on the Floss, The Awakening, and A Daughter of Today, Ethel, Jo, and Anne manage the slippery relations with others: each heroine acknowledges her intersubjective identity. Where Maggie, Edna, and Elfreda are punished by death for rebellion, Ethel, Jo, and Anne rebel and survive.

Accommodation may not look heroic, feminist, or noble, but the young heroines of these girls' stories express their active agency through this apparent capitulation to external pressures. Ethel, Jo, and Anne recognize that they must accommodate themselves to the individuals who wield power over them. Ethel panders

to her father's demands by becoming more adept at domestic chores, giving up her informal schooling, and becoming his sole confidante. Jo, too, tries to keep the home circle happy by adopting Beth's role of self-sacrifice, giving up writing, and accepting her loneliness. Likewise, Anne continually attempts to prove herself worthy of Green Gables: she labours to do better at domestic chores, she excels in school, and she becomes a respected individual in Avonlea.

Within her accommodation, each girl establishes her own particular way of negotiating contradictory forces: herein lies her agency. Ethel devotes herself to her father, relinquishing any hopes of marrying Norman Ogilvie and, perhaps, remaining childlike and undeveloped.⁷ However, she also turns to the heavenly Father for consolation, as Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström suggests (Sandbach-Dahlström 113). This devotion to God provides Ethel with the excuse to continue her independent behaviour: she may establish a school at Cocks Moor, petition for a church there, raise money for the church, and, ultimately, provide her eldest brother with a job as curate at the newly-built church. Because Ethel's devotion is to the heavenly Father, her independent activity is beyond reproach, unless her society wishes to reveal itself as impious.

Similarly, Jo accommodates herself to the March family circle yet recognizes that this connection is not enough for her. She begins writing again, even though it is against Beth's dying wishes, and, because she locates the fiction within the domestic sphere, she produces a successful novel. The message here is potent: the domestic sphere may seem to offer limited possibilities for girls and women but may also allow room for productive independence. While some critics have been dismayed that Jo marries and creates her own family circle (see Fetterley, for example), in doing so, Jo clearly establishes her own interdependent circle, a space as close to independence as she can get without feeling the loneliness and anguish she experienced as a spinster: "These were dark days to her, for something like despair came over her when she

thought of spending all her life in that quiet house, devoted to hum-drum cares” (Alcott 432).

Anne, more than the other two, finds within her accommodation to family life the most surprising rewards. Her need to be accepted propels her into academic excellence which, in turn, commands community respect. In addition, she sacrifices her scholarship to remain home with Marilla at Green Gables. Suddenly, instead of being a child desperate for acceptance, she is a parental figure, taking care of Marilla and her home. Marilla acknowledges that she cannot look after Green Gables herself: “I may lose my sight altogether; and anyway I’ll not be fit to run things” (Montgomery 303). Anne is finally established without a doubt and without condition at Green Gables. Nothing she does anymore will carry the additional question of whether it will cause her to be sent away. Moreover, the domestic power has found its way into her hands: if she decides to leave for whatever reason--to take up her scholarship, or move to Charlottetown--Marilla and not Anne will lose her home because Marilla cannot look after it by herself. After Anne announces that she will stay, Marilla expresses her gratitude: “I’ll make it up to you though, Anne” (Montgomery 305). It is now Marilla who is gratefully willing to please Anne, because Anne has guaranteed her Green Gables.

While Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery may be seen to espouse a message of complacency--rest content with your lot--they also show that accommodation is necessary for survival. Because the family is seemingly inescapable, the girls must adapt to their families for identity. However, each novel asserts that accommodation is not only an active choice for the heroine, but is also rewarding for her. By underscoring the constructedness of family, each novel acknowledges the continual possibilities for re-definition and change. Furthermore, each text’s focus on the potential for abuse and oppression within the family highlights the heroine’s agency in successfully managing contradictory and slippery family relations. As I will show in

the following chapter, these three heroines establish a sense of identity for themselves that is at odds with traditional femininity and yet is ultimately accepted by their communities. Both the heroine and the reader learn an important lesson: accommodation may be necessary, but negotiating is always possible.

Notes

¹ The family has always been a central and contentious issue for feminism. See Rethinking the Family, edited by Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom, the special issue of Hypatia on The Family and Feminist Theory, edited by Ellen K. Feder and Eva Feder Kittay, and Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch for several examples of the wide variety of feminist opinion on this topic. Barrett and McIntosh's examination of the ideological roots of the family and its benefits to individuals seems most even-handed because it pinpoints why individuals perpetuate the family and yet refuses to cast the individual as a victim.

² For example, Barbara A. White pits the heroine against her community when she writes that didactic girls' stories, like Little Women, present "young heroines [who] must learn to conquer their pride and become humble, docile, and obedient. Any spirit or resistance against injustice is considered a 'sickness' that must be cured by strong doses of religion" (White 26). See also Elizabeth Segal and Annis Pratt for examples of critics who find the female Bildungsroman disappointing.

³ See Harbour Winn for a comparison of Alcott and Chopin.

⁴ Carolyn Heilbrun suggests that Jo, and the reader, realize that she is the true father of the family (Heilbrun 20).

⁵ See Foster and Simons for a discussion of the British-American rivalry in Little Women.

⁶ Both of these terms refer to the poor London children who were adopted by Canadians.

⁷ See Foster and Simons for a discussion about Ethel's lack of development in The Daisy Chain.

Chapter Three
The Female Subject:
Negotiating Identity

Trouble is inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it.

--Judith Butler

In a sense we haven't got an identity until someone tells our story. The fiction makes us real.

--Robert Kroetch

One of the fundamental features of the Bildungsroman is the heroine's quest for identity. Who she is, where she belongs in the social fabric, what will bring fulfillment to her are questions that are invariably raised. These are problematic questions at best if one assumes that identity is not fixed, but fluid, that an individual develops in response to her environment, or that there is no essential, *a priori*, "true" self repressed by social convention. If an individual is constituted by society--its institutions, practices, ideology--where is her agency? Why would not all young girls from a similar social and historical setting develop in a similar way? While the narrative form, discussed in chapter one, and her social context, discussed in chapter two, place limitations on the heroine, she ultimately constructs herself through the options available to her, options that are in part determined by her race, class, sexuality, and, particularly, gender.

Written in a historical period riven with contradictory messages about the role of women, The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables highlight the heroine's struggle to find fulfillment in a world that often devalues women. By exposing their young heroines to several female role models, the three authors expose some traditionally-accepted views about femaleness in their novels. That the heroines do not emulate the models of femininity around them, suggests the extent to which the girls

actively construct an identity for themselves. While critics have often seen the heroine's conformity to the social status quo as a dominant feature of the girls' story, as I mentioned in my introduction, these heroines do not simply conform. Rather, because their development and acceptance of the prescribed gender role is so difficult and troublesome, and because their gender identity needs to be constantly re-articulated and re-established, Ethel, Jo, and Anne disclose to the reader that possibilities for female identity abound, even in a seemingly narrow arena. Moreover, the girls expose the reader to the constructedness nature of gender and of identity: because "femaleness" is troublesome for the heroines, the reader understands that it is not a natural or essential trait but one that has to be learned. This lesson is significant as it allows the reader to recognize the extent to which conformity is the heroine's "choice": Ethel could continue to perform domestic tasks inadequately, for example, but she wants family approbation. Ultimately, the three girls successfully negotiate to have their unique "mix" of identities accepted by their communities. While the girls learn how to accommodate their communities, their characters do not change significantly over the course of the novels, regardless of social pressure, suggesting that they have found, in the options available to them, outlets for their own self-constructed identity. Ultimately, these three novels underscore the heroine's agency and celebrate the possibilities for changing the feminine script: the reader learns about the powerful tool of negotiation. The heroines negotiate to have their difference accepted.

Prevailing attitudes towards women

Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery were writing in an era fraught with anxiety over women's roles. The gender ideology contradicted itself by at once espousing rigid and biologically-determined gender roles and allowing for a re-definition of these roles. Mary Poovey examines the "uneven" gender ideology in mid-Victorian England. She finds that "[t]his unevenness not only characterizes the conservative ideological work of these representations, but it also allowed for the emergence in the 1850s of a genuinely--although

incompletely articulated--oppositional voice" (Poovey 4). Similarly, Nancy Cott locates a contradiction regarding women's role in nineteenth-century New England between "the ideology of domesticity, which gave women a limited and sex-specific role to play, primarily in the home; and feminism, which attempted to remove sex-specific limits on women's opportunities and capacities" (Cott 5).

The rigid gender roles expected of women are clearly defined by writers like William Cobbett in his Advice to Young Men where he lists the things young men ought to seek in a woman (and therefore lists characteristics women should have): "1. Chastity; 2. Sobriety; 3. Industry; 4. Frugality; 5. Cleanliness; 6. Knowledge of domestic affairs; 7. Good Temper; 8. Beauty" (Cobbett 86). In the mid-nineteenth century, a belief in distinct roles for men and women was suggested by the following anonymous article published in The Christian Guardian (4 April 1849), a Canadian Methodist weekly which also published some of Montgomery's work (note the repeated lack of active verbs to describe women's role):

Man is strong--woman is beautiful,
Man is daring and confident--woman is diffident and unassuming,
Man is great in action--woman in suffering,
Man shines abroad--woman at home,
Man talks to convince--woman to persuade and please,
Man has a rugged heart--woman a soft and tender one,
Man prevents misery--woman relieves it,
Man has science--woman taste,
Man has judgment--woman sensibility,
Man is a being of justice--woman an angel of mercy.

(cited in Light and Prentice 222)

A poem printed anonymously in The Daily Examiner (16 October 1897), a Charlottetown PEI paper, presents similar sentiments about women's role:

What Pleases a Woman

It pleases her to be called a sensible little woman.

It pleases her to be called a well-dressed woman.

It pleases her to be told that she is fascinating.

It pleases her to be told that she improves a man by her companionship.

It pleases her to depend on some man and pretend she is ruling him.

It pleases her to be treated courteously and with respect and to be talked to reasonably. (“What Pleases a Woman” [4])

Alongside these simplistic definitions of women’s role in society, however, a series of important debates were raging: the battle for suffrage, the fight to open and keep open schools and universities for women, and a fundamental determination that women have basic freedom over their lives, from donning bloomers to riding bicycles to employment opportunities.¹ In the same Daily Examiner containing the above article, for example, is an article announcing an attempt to establish a “Local Council of Women” to work in conjunction with “the National Council of Women” (The Daily Examiner, 16 October 1897). It did not take long for the battles to become everyday discourse. An opinion piece in The Halifax Herald (8 October 1901) asserts the importance of a well-rounded education for girls: “I honestly believe that the crime that calls for reforming more than drink or gambling or anything else is the way that girls are raised, and the total ignorance of everything that a woman ought to know with which they are rushed into matrimony” (“The Ideal Marriage” 8). Even before the new century, women’s issues were being discussed in communities both urban and rural. For example, the Cavendish Literary Society, of which L.M. Montgomery was a member, held a debate on 19 March 1886 on women’s suffrage (Simpson 183). In the May 1894 Mount Allison University student newspaper, The Argosy, a section devoted to women lists American university women’s accomplishments and suggests that women are held back by culture not by nature (Argosy 10). Rather than

being a natural distribution of qualities, as the article in The Christian Guardian claimed, gender roles were beginning to be seen by many people as socially imposed.²

Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery wrote in this era of social upheaval. Poovey suggests that “[b]ecause the domestic ideal of female nature . . . was both internally contradictory and unevenly deployed, it was open to a variety of readings that could be mobilized in contradictory practices” (Poovey 15). These contradictory practices manifest themselves in The Daisy Chain, Little Women, and Anne of Green Gables. While each author exposes the predominant discourse on gender and presents ideals of femininity, she also shows that the young heroine constructs herself within the limited range of feminine options available, seeming to conform to society’s ideals yet maintaining the unique qualities that, at first, seemed so at odds with femininity.

The three authors show that, in the society of their particular novel, being female often implies limitations, weaknesses, or undesirability. In expressing some common views on women’s roles, they emphasize the heroine’s agency: Ethel, Jo, and Anne resist stereotypes of femininity and forge a positive identity for themselves, despite prevailing beliefs. As I will show later, they do not wholly internalize the ideology they confront. In The Daisy Chain, Norman expresses his thoughts on what it means to be a woman. He is impressed by some verses of Ethel’s and wishes she were a boy so that the school master could see them (Yonge 19). The implication is that Ethel can never really write verse for other people because she is female. Indeed, Ethel takes great pains to hide her classical studies (Yonge 9). Norman also reveals the widespread idea that women are prone to nervous conditions. He experiences much anxiety and nervous prostration after his mother’s death. When his father finally diagnoses the problem and forces him to rest from schoolwork, Norman “mutter[s] disdainfully,” “Nerves . . . I thought they were only fit for fine ladies” (Yonge 105).

Margaret, Ethel’s eldest sister, also reveals a surprising understanding of women’s limited place in society. In trying to dissuade Ethel from keeping up with her brother’s

studies in addition to all her other duties, she tells Ethel, “we all know that men have more power than women” (Yonge 162-63). While Margaret probably means that men have the natural capacity to accomplish more than women, she also tells the reader that men are granted more power. Norman can go to school and get a degree; Ethel cannot, as Margaret points out: “If you could get all the honours in the University—what would it come to? You can’t take a first-class” (Yonge 163). A woman’s position, as Margaret tries to make clear to Ethel, is limited by society. In an earlier conversation with Mr. Wilmot, Margaret responds to the rector’s compliments about Ethel’s pioneering enterprise at Cocksmoor. She says, “Still, girls are told they ought to wait patiently, and not to be eager for self-imposed duties” (Yonge 136). Wilmot acknowledges that girls often cannot fulfill the roles expected of them: “I am not saying that it is not the appointed discipline for the girls themselves. . . . If they would submit, and do their best, it would doubtless prove the most beneficial thing for them; but it is a trial in which they often fail” (Yonge 136). Margaret responds with confusion over the contradictory messages: “It is a great puzzle” (Yonge 136).

Schoolboys in The Daisy Chain also express the belief that women are the weaker sex. Young Tom, easily influenced by his schoolmates, will not listen to a lecture by his eldest sister because he rebels against “woman rule” (Yonge 156), nor will he allow Ethel to help him with his lessons because she is a girl (Yonge 289). The boys at school also taunt Tom into silence over a misdemeanor by claiming, “the Mays are all like girls—can’t keep a secret—not one of them” (Yonge 166). Of course, Tom keeps the secret—better to be dishonest than girlish.

The condescending attitudes towards women in Little Women are not as overt as in The Daisy Chain. The notion that young women must learn self-sacrifice subtly permeates the text, as it does the other two. However, in Mr. March’s letter to his wife, women’s dutiful and self-sacrificial position in the world becomes clear:

I know they will remember all I said to them, that they will be loving children to you, will do their duty faithfully, fight their bosom enemies bravely, and conquer themselves so beautifully, that when I come back to them I may be fonder and prouder than ever of my little women. (Alcott 8)

That the girls need to “conquer” themselves shows the masochistic principle in the novel: the girls’ personalities must be overcome, and the girls must approximate a feminine ideal. The girls’ mother, Marmee, expresses the limited options for women in this society: “To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing which can happen to a woman” (Alcott 97).

In Little Women, however, unlike The Daisy Chain, characters do not explicitly acknowledge women’s ‘inferior’ position but indirectly reveal prevailing assumptions. When Laurie is ill and Jo is trying to convince him to let her in against his grandfather’s wishes, she responds to his claim that “boys make such a row” and are not allowed to visit by saying, “Isn’t there some nice girl who’d read and amuse you? Girls are quiet, and like to play nurse” (Alcott 48). This statement is of course ironic: Jo means herself and she is neither quiet nor typical. However, she will trot out the common stereotypes of the day if they suit her ends, which is to get into the great house next door. Along the same lines and during the same visit, Jo prepares the grandfather for accepting future visits from her and the other girls: “He [Laurie] seems a little lonely, and young folks would do him good, perhaps. We are only girls, but we should be glad to help if we could” (Alcott 53). Again, Jo is using stereotypical humility with some degree of irony in order to achieve her goal of becoming friends with Laurie. However, the reader can thereby see the stereotypes that do exist in Jo’s society: women are quieter than boys, they are helpful, and somewhat powerless (“only girls”). When Jo proposes that Laurie join the Pickwick Club, the gender stereotypes once more arise, again steeped in irony. The girls are all posing as male characters from Charles Dickens’ Pickwick Papers. When Jo asks her sisters if Laurie can join, “Mr. Winkle rose to say, with great elegance, ‘We don’t wish any boys; they only

joke and bounce about. This is a ladies' club, and we wish to be private and proper” (Alcott 105). The irony lies in the fact that the girls are posing as men yet believe they have a ladies' club. The gender stereotypes are clear, regardless of the irony: boys are active and boisterous; girls are quiet and contained in the private sphere.

Anne of Green Gables is more explicit than Little Women: while the novel does not claim, like The Daisy Chain, that femaleness is weakness, it suggests that being female is distinctly undesirable. Anne is not wanted at Green Gables, she is a mistake, because she is a girl. The Cuthberts requested a boy from the orphanage and were sent Anne instead. Anne cries out, “ You don't want me because I'm not a boy!” (Montgomery 23). Marilla points out that “a girl would be of no use to us” (Montgomery 26). Furthermore, Matthew has a “mortal dread” of girls and women, as Marilla notes to herself (Montgomery 48). Matthew's response to women indicates the undesirability of females, if only to him: “Matthew dreaded all women except Marilla and Mrs. Rachel; he had an uncomfortable feeling that the mysterious creatures were secretly laughing at him” (Montgomery 9). He is surprised to find himself enjoying Anne's company:

He had never expected to enjoy the society of a little girl. Women were bad enough in all conscience, but little girls were worse. He detested the way they had of sidling past him timidly, with sidewise glances, as if they expected him to gobble them up at a mouthful if they ventured to say a word. (Montgomery 15)

While Montgomery does not give us an overt indication that being female is a weakness or limitation, she does show that it is not the requested and useful gender in Avonlea society.

Troubling gender roles

Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery not only expose the predominant attitudes about women's role in society, but they also show, through example, some typical constructions of female identity. In so doing, each text underscores the heroine's agency: the young girl chooses to construct herself differently than the women around her. Critics have often

suggested that the heroines of girls' stories conform to their appropriate gender roles. For example, Kimberley Reynolds claims that these types of novels do not challenge the feminine ideal:

The girl rebel was characterized as outspoken, intelligent, a marvellous story-teller and instigator of outrageous schemes. She often behaved wildly, was wilful and revelled in unconventional behaviour. In spite of these superficial features, which seem to be embracing a new image of womanhood and a revised notion of femininity, these 'naughty' girls exist as part of a convention which is reactionary as its adult counterpart was radical. In girls' fiction, the tenacity of the traditional representation of acceptable womanhood is clear: the old ideal is perpetuated, not eradicated. (Reynolds 98)

While I agree with Reynolds that containing the heroine within a proper feminine sphere serves to protect the status quo, I also believe that the challenge to the status quo remains encoded in the girls' rebellions: that the girls do not begin by embracing "acceptable womanhood" is suggestive enough that this role does not have a lot to offer the young heroines. Seeming to agree with Reynolds, some critics of Yonge's fiction have suggested that Yonge "never tired of impressing upon her girl readers the virtues of 'maiden lives' and amiable acceptance of subordination" nor did she miss "an opportunity of urging her girl readers back to the needle or the kitchen" (Cadogan and Craig 27, 20). Shirley Foster and Judy Simons characterize The Daisy Chain as seeking "to present and teach a desirable femininity" (Foster and Simons 69). Similarly, T.D. MacLulich believes that Montgomery espouses conformity: "[Montgomery] habitually resolves the conflict between society and the imaginative individual in favour of conformity to social expectations" (MacLulich 471).

As Karla Walters notes about Little Women, however, the ultimate conformity of the heroine is not the real issue. She suggests that the contradiction between conflicting desires is the story:

In Alcott's novel, the happy marriage of morality and ambition can be achieved by women only if they submit to an entirely secular, domestic ideal. Although this moral ideal is consistently upheld as a model, Alcott frankly shows that her heroines do not easily submit to its confines. Indeed, the chief conflict engaging the March sisters is the contradiction between their perception of domesticity as confinement and their personal ambition and desires. (Walters 154)

The heroines may adapt themselves to their community by accepting duties and roles expected of them. However, the novels insist that this accommodation is not easy. Penny Brown argues that Yonge, arguably the most conservative novelist of the three, acknowledges the restraints on young women's lives:

Yonge, like several of her contemporaries, is demonstrating her awareness of the day-to-day frustrations of young females with the cultural and gendered influences on their lives, while doing her best to reconcile her young readers to their situation and encouraging them by depicting fulfilling channels for their energies. The area in which Ethel is allowed to fulfil her ambitions is that of activities generated by the family's deep religious principles, the only outlet, in fact, for efforts outside the home for the girls. (Brown 102)

The trouble the young heroines create in trying to fit in to their society belies the message of conformity that some critics think the authors are espousing. If the author wanted to convey the simple message that one needs to conform, why create a heroine who refuses to submit easily? Indeed, why create heroines who have such difficulty with their gender role in the first place?

While the heroines seem to conform to their gender role, and, while the authors seem to lobby for the heroine's conformity to social expectations, these girls' stories are not simple tales of girls growing into proper womanhood. Indeed, each protagonist makes "gender trouble," in Judith Butler's words: she subverts "naturalized" gender, as she attempts to establish a sense of identity for herself. Discussing compulsory

heterosexuality--heterosexuality as a normative requirement in our society--and the ways in which gender is naturalized, Butler claims that gender is never an original or natural manifestation of sex, but rather needs to be “performed,” or endlessly repeated in order to produce the effect of an identity. Identity, itself, Butler claims, is not self-identical or fixed, but always the effect of performance. Because gender norms are endlessly repeated, they are always in the process of being constructed and re-instituted. It is in these endless repetitions, imitations for which there is no original, that agency lies. Because individuals are constantly in the process of creating themselves, change becomes continually possible. “Gender trouble,” then, refers to both the anxiety over producing a naturalized gender identity and the inevitable failure of such a task. This gender trouble permeates all three novels, both in the heroine’s inability to conform to gender requirements and in the other female characters’ gender constructions. By presenting the heroines with various versions of femininity that the heroines do not emulate, these texts stress that gender is not a natural or biologically-given identity. Indeed, each woman who is set up as some type of role model for the heroine, ultimately fails at her gender task.

Ethel in The Daisy Chain is surrounded by her mother, her sisters Margaret and Flora, as well as Meta Rivers, her future sister-in-law. Each of these women, except Meta, finds in traditional feminine roles some kind of power, yet none of them, again except Meta, is upheld as an ideal. Ethel’s mother is depicted as the stereotypical angel in the house³: “Here entered, with a baby in her arms, a lady with a beautiful countenance of calm sweetness, looking almost too young to be the mother of the tall Margaret who followed her” (Yonge 4). She wields strong influence over her family because of her adherence to the domestic role: “It was pleasant to see that large family in the hush and reverence of such teaching, the mother’s gentle power preventing the outbreaks of recklessness to which even at such times the wild young spirits were liable” (Yonge 5). Not only does Mrs. May have power, however “gentle,” but the family’s attitude towards her is one of reverence, as though she were a god of some sort. That she dies very early in the novel makes her

influence and power in this angelic role more palpable. The entire narrative thrust rests on Mrs. May's death and the family's attempts to live their lives without her controlling wisdom. Dr. May recognizes how little he has had to assume responsibility for his family with his wife by his side: he had "trusted all at home to his wife" (Yonge 108), and, as he tells Ethel, "I was spoilt as a boy, and my Maggie carried on the spoiling, by never letting me feel its effects" (Yonge 123). Ethel's mother's position is indisputable: she embodies perfect domestic tranquillity and wisdom. Arguably, she must die, first, so her children may grow and develop in her absence and, second, to maintain her idealized position: if she were to continue living, flaws in her femininity would inevitably reveal themselves. In order for a woman to be ideal, the text seems to suggest, she has to be dead.

Margaret is another woman in Ethel's life who culls power from the feminine domestic sphere. In the wake of her mother's death and her own disability from the accident, Ethel's sister Margaret sees herself as the new head of the family:

[Margaret] had the government in her hands, and had never been used to see him [her father] exercise it much in detail . . . , and had succeeded to her authority at a time when his health and spirits were in such a state as to make it doubly needful to spare him. It was no wonder that she sometimes carried her consideration beyond what was strictly right. . . . Nor had she yet detected her own satisfaction in being the first with every one in the family. (Yonge 143)

Margaret recognizes the power of being in her mother's position, as well as the power she has as an invalid. When she is carried down to the family room, she feels some of her power slipping from her:

She had been willing to put it off as long as she could, dreading to witness the change belowstairs, and feeling, too, that in entering the family room, without power of leaving it, she was losing all quiet and solitude, as well as giving up that monopoly of her father in the evening, which had been her great privilege. (Yonge 146).

Like her mother before her, Margaret finds in her constricted position, power which she exploits. And, like her mother, Margaret dies, leaving “the impress her example had left on those around her” (Yonge 575). Because the power of having her father’s chief confidence slowly slips from her hands into Ethel’s-- “Margaret, lying inactive and thoughtful, began to observe that the fulness of his confidence was passing to Ethel” (Yonge 284)--and she gradually fades into death, the novel’s assumption seems to be that Margaret is not an ideal woman. Foster and Simons have claimed that the ill Margaret May, along with Beth March, present “debility . . . as a desirable image of the feminine” (Foster and Simons 184). However, Margaret dies, which implies that this kind of femininity cannot sustain itself in the world. Mrs. May had to die in order for her femininity to remain unimpaired, but Margaret dies because her femininity is inadequate for life. In The Clever Woman of the Family, Yonge’s disabled character and, arguably, model woman, Ermine Williams, is much like Margaret: unable to walk, compelled to stay in circumscribed quarters, and a fount of wisdom for the other characters. However, Ermine, due to her cleverness and her ability to act despite her ailments, lives and marries the hero. That Margaret’s end, unlike Ermine’s, is tragic speaks to the ultimate lack of fulfillment an entirely domestic role provides. Ermine pursued her own writing and learning outside the domestic sphere: Margaret did not.

Ethel’s second eldest sister Flora also uses a feminine strategy to wield power. Instead of finding power in being the angel of the house, Flora puts on a mask of charming femininity in order to manipulate others to her will. She deftly handles the Ladies’ Committee and their interests in Cocksmoor, as will be discussed later. Most notably, she marries George Rivers for his position and money, then attempts to make him into someone worthy of her. Flora encourages her husband to run for office and then “tutors” him-- though “it was hardly visible”--because he does not have the intellectual capacity to succeed on his own (Yonge 438). Mr. Spencer looks forward to her political letters from London, feeling she should have been ‘a special correspondent’: “but her cleverest

sentences always were prefaced with 'George says,' or 'George thinks,' in a manner that made her appear merely the dutiful echo of his sentiments" (Yonge 456). Of course, the reader understands, along with the narrator, that the situation is really reversed, and George is the dutiful echo of his scheming and brilliant wife. Testament to how little the family attributes George's success to him, is Harry's excited statement before leaving to visit Flora in London: "What fun to see Flora a member of Parliament!" (Yonge 470). However brilliant and successful she is, Flora feels the need to cloak her ambitions in an acceptable patriarchal figure, her husband. Ultimately, of course, she must be punished for transgressing proper femininity-- a woman could not run for office in the nineteenth century: her child dies from neglect, and Flora recognizes the price she must pay for having ambition that she cannot fulfill on her own. Like Margaret, Flora does not embody an ideal femininity.

In *Meta Rivers*, however, Yonge seems to find an example of female perfection. She is described throughout the novel as fairy-like, and named a hummingbird by Dr. May and the rest of the family. Norman's impression of her expresses her feminine qualities of other-worldliness and decorativeness:

She was on a very small scale, and seemed to him like a fairy, in the airy lightness and grace of her movements, and the blithe gladsomeness of her gestures and countenance. Form and features, though perfectly healthful and brisk, had the peculiar finish and delicacy of a miniature painting, and were enhanced by the sunny glance of her dark soft smiling eyes. (Yonge 130)

When Margaret and Ethel discuss Meta's trip to London, Ethel says: "Amid all that enjoyment, she is always choosing the good, and leaving the evil; always sacrificing something and then being happy in the sacrifice" (Yonge 304). Meta truly seems a kind of nineteenth-century meta-woman: she is self-sacrificing, constantly cheerful, diminutive, childlike yet mature. She is not perfection, however, and works hard to locate and ameliorate her perceived flaws, such as self-indulgence and love of finery. When she finds

she is not a good teacher, for example, she resolves to learn to teach well, not for her own ambition but for the children's best interests (Yonge 217-18). Unlike Margaret and Flora, Meta has power--she is wealthy and independent--but she does not exercise it. While the narrator certainly seems to be offering Meta as a model for Ethel and all young girls to follow, Meta herself has a different understanding of ideal womanhood. She says to Norman: "To be like [Ethel] has always been my ambition" (Yonge 534). If Meta is presented as an ideal for girls to follow yet she models herself after Ethel, then the implicit message is that Ethel is the model of femininity to which readers should be looking: unlike her sisters, Ethel embodies a femininity that can sustain itself and is beyond reproach.

In Alcott's Little Women, Jo is presented with four very distinct types of femininity in her sisters and her mother. Again, all four women construct themselves as traditionally feminine and all, except Amy, expose the inadequacy of their brand of femininity. Meg, her eldest sister, is the domestic woman with a love of luxury. She squeezes her feet into tight high-heeled slippers, is delighted with her three sets of gloves when she goes visiting for a fortnight, and, more than the other girls, resents the March family's poverty: "She found [the poverty] harder to bear than the others, because she could remember a time when home was beautiful, life full of ease and pleasure, and want of any kind unknown" (Alcott 37). Meg's ambition is to have "a lovely house, full of all sort of luxurious things; nice food, pretty clothes, handsome furniture, pleasant people, and heaps of money. I am to be mistress of it, and manage it as I like, with plenty of servants, so I never need work a bit" (Alcott 142). Meg does not achieve this dream; instead, she marries a poor tutor and continues to yearn for luxuries: after she is married, she longs for her wealthy friend's "pretty things" and "pit[ies] herself because she had not got them" (280). While she seems to represent one aspect of ideal womanhood--she is pretty and domesticated--she cannot be seen as an ideal because she continues to struggle along without the material possessions which would fulfill her.

Beth is the invalid in the family and, like Mrs. May, is the picture of the angel in the house, "a housewifely little creature" (Alcott 38). She is self-sacrificing, meek, submissive and quiet. Beth is "too bashful to go to school," as to be among other people causes her too much suffering (Alcott 38). She passes unnoticed by others: "There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully, that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind" (39). Her dream is to "stay at home safe with father and mother, and help take care of the family" (Alcott 143). As previously mentioned, Foster and Simons believe that Beth is upheld as a desirable image of femininity, but I disagree. Since she cannot function in the world, Beth can only die. Alcott's message is similar to Yonge's about Margaret May: women must be active and powerful within their restricted sphere, or there is no place for them. The angel in the house role is not enough to sustain life. Indeed, Jo points out that Beth's overwhelming shyness is, in fact, a personality flaw that needs to be "fought" (Alcott 121).

In Amy, Alcott presents a polar opposite of Beth. Where Beth is meek and sacrificial, Amy is greedy and demanding. She also understands how to charm and to use her talents. Like Flora May in The Daisy Chain, Amy manipulates others: "she got through her lessons as well as she could, and managed to escape reprimands by being a model of deportment. She was a great favourite with her mates, being good-tempered, and possessing the happy art of pleasing without effort" (Alcott 40). Unlike Flora, however, Amy does not have pretensions to perfection. She continually struggles to improve herself. Her dream is to "go to Rome, and do fine pictures, and be the best artist in the whole world" (Alcott 143). She, more than Meg or Beth, achieves her dream. She goes to Rome and paints pictures. She also marries Laurie, the hero of the novel. However, she relinquishes her ambition to a degree because she feels her art is not up to the standards she sees in Rome. Perhaps more than Meg or Beth, Amy is closer to being an ideal feminine role model. Elizabeth Lennox Keyser believes that Amy is the successful artist figure in the

novel. However, Keyser notes that this success is due to Amy's manipulations: Amy herself is her own masterpiece. Because of Amy's artfulness, Keyser believes that "she is both more than a conventional heroine and less than a true hero" (Keyser 78). In her artistic manipulations, Amy consciously plays with gender expectations by giving her community what it wants: the text seems to assert that an awareness of gender constructions is the route to success.

Marmee, the girls' mother, presents a dominant image of femininity which is the least described: as John Stephens says, the implicit ideology, or "passive ideology" in the text, can be the most powerful (Stephens 10). Like Mrs. May in The Daisy Chain, Marmee is domesticated, wise, sacrificial, comforting. She convinces the girls to give up their Christmas breakfast for a starving family down the street. She is constantly doing volunteer work for the war as well as numerous other charities. She is not beautiful, but, of course, her girls think she is (Alcott 7). What is most surprising, then, is her disclosure to Jo of her bad temper. She says, "You think your temper is the worst in the world; but mine used to be just like it." To which, Jo responds incredulously, "Yours, mother? Why, you are never angry." Mrs. March confesses, "I've been trying to cure it for forty years, and have only succeeded in controlling it. I am angry nearly every day of my life, Jo; but I have learned not to show it; and I still hope to learn not to feel it" (Alcott 79). She relates to Jo that it was easy to control her temper when she first met Jo's father: "But by and by, when I had four little daughters round me, and we were poor, then the old trouble began again; for I am not patient by nature, and it tried me very much to see my children wanting anything" (Alcott 80). Marmee is angry, not for some inexplicable reason, but because she is poor. The text makes clear that one must conquer this kind of anger. Alcott lets her reader know that Mrs. March is the feminine role model to follow, by having Mrs. March aware of her position: "I must try to practice all the virtues I would have my little girls possess, for I was their example" (Alcott 80). Through confessing her temper, however, Marmee suggests that the role which she so adeptly fulfills does not come

naturally. Marmee, the model housekeeper, also tells Jo, "I never enjoyed housekeeping" (Alcott 113), showing that the work that goes with the role is not a natural joy either. If Marmee is an example of perfect womanhood, she also reveals how much she falls short of ideal femininity. Marmee's struggle to perform as she should, and her inevitable failure, gestures towards the problematic nature of gender identification.

Anne of Green Gables, unlike the other two works, does not have many traditional feminine role models. Anne is surrounded by three significant female figures: Marilla, Mrs. Rachel Lynde, and Diana. Marilla and Mrs. Lynde, while powerful, act only in the domestic sphere and rigidly maintain their beliefs in the dominant ideology that this is women's proper place. Unlike conventional representations of femininity, such as Mrs. May or Marmee, Marilla is described as harsh and almost masculine: "Marilla was a tall, thin woman, with angles and without curves; her dark hair showed some gray streaks and was always twisted up in a hard little knot behind with two wire hairpins stuck aggressively through it" (Montgomery 5). Furthermore, she has "narrow experience" and a "rigid conscience," but shows signs of a latent sense of humour (Montgomery 5). Rather than being matronly, domestic and womanly, Marilla is depicted as hard and aggressive. She presents a new model of femininity to the reader and Anne. Rather than representing a type of femininity which might be recognizable from Anne's romance reading, Marilla is a decision-maker and authority figure. She tells Matthew that they will keep Anne--the ultimate decision significantly rests with her-- and that he better not "go interfering with my methods" (Montgomery 48). Unlike Margaret and Flora May's power, Marilla's power is culled not from traditional conceptions of femininity, but from traditionally masculine forms of power, even if it is contained in the domestic sphere. Thus, Marilla represents to Anne an atypical woman who nevertheless finds acceptance in Avonlea.

Mrs. Rachel Lynde, on the other hand, is presented as the ultimate matron and domestic woman. However, instead of being a demure, self-sacrificial angel in the house, she is overbearing, bossy, and gossipy, as the narrator describes:

Mrs. Rachel Lynde was one of those capable creatures who can manage their own concerns and those of other folks into the bargain. She was a notable housewife; her work was always done and well done; she 'ran' the Sewing Circle, helped run the Sunday-school, and was the strongest prop of the Church Aid Society and Foreign Missions Auxiliary. Yet with all this Mrs. Rachel found abundant time to sit for hours at her kitchen window . . . and [keep] a sharp eye on the main road that crossed the hollow and wound up the steep red hill beyond. (Montgomery 2)

For a woman who later tells Anne that Anne will "kill" herself if she takes an Arts course as well as teach (Montgomery 305), Mrs. Lynde boasts an impressive résumé. Anne probably learned from Mrs. Lynde that one can do many things at once. Again, like Marilla, Rachel Lynde is not the role model one would expect in a girls' story: she is not overly wise or beautiful or good. However, she is powerful and manages to not only fit into the Avonlea community, but also almost single-handedly regulate Avonlea propriety. Both Marilla and Mrs. Lynde confine themselves to the domestic sphere and function to express the dominant ideological beliefs. Mrs. Lynde's always-ready advice on child-rearing or women's professions--Anne should not have too much education--indicate that, while she is a powerful woman in her own right, she has not engaged with or challenged the beliefs she has inherited. Conversely, it could be argued that Mrs. Lynde, like Marilla, has herself negotiated to maintain power and acceptance at once.

Anne's best friend Diana Berry perhaps most closely resembles traditional femininity. Described as a "very pretty little girl," Diana fits the image of what Anne herself would like to be. Again, though, Montgomery allows her readers to understand that Diana is not a model girl. She wants to read, which is contrary to her mother's desire for her. When Anne first meets Diana, her mother complains about the extent to which Diana is always "poring over a book" (Montgomery 86). Unfortunately for Diana, her parents refuse to let her study after school with the other Avonlea students to prepare for the Queen's examinations, "as her parents did not intend to send her to Queen's"

(Montgomery 243). While Diana seems to be the perfect little girl--going to school, behaving properly, being content, marrying a nice boy (in Anne of the Island)-- the reader glimpses Diana's potential to be something else altogether, perhaps someone more like Anne. By exposing the prevailing attitudes towards femaleness and by presenting the heroine and reader with female characters who construct themselves in ways that tend to conform to feminine ideals and who are inevitably unable to achieve idealized femininity, the writers emphasize both the impossibility of conformity and the heroine's agency. Ethel, Jo, and Anne forge acceptance for their own feminine identity.

Performing gender

Each heroine chooses not to construct herself like the women around her, and, because of this choice, she faces pressure from her community for not conforming to established gender codes. Her agency does not lie in somehow escaping gender constraints because this is impossible: the individual can only establish an effect of identity, according to Butler, by continually inscribing herself through gender. The heroine displays agency by altering the cultural scripts she has inherited. Butler suggests that the necessity of repeatedly inscribing oneself in the gender system in order to produce the effect of a coherent identity can be liberatory: "*Woman* itself is a term of process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification" (33, original italics). Butler focuses on the performative construction of gender, suggesting that drag, by its supposed "imitation" of natural heterosexual gender relations, exposes all gender to be imitative. The performance defines the individual identity at the moment of the performance. Furthermore, all manifestations of gender are performative, continually constructing identity through each act and articulation.

In the three girls' stories I examine, the girls inscribe themselves through gender because, as Butler would point out, they have no choice: gender is repeatedly constructed

in every action and behaviour. However, while the girls often seem to conform to their gender stereotypes, they also make “gender trouble.” Moreover, in a paradigmatic textual play which illuminates the extent to which every manifestation of gender is performative, the girls often overtly “perform” gender roles. In places where they do conform to external directives, they also flaunt their lack of conformity. At points in the novels, the heroines put on, with a vengeance, the roles expected of them. Elaine Showalter suggests that, in Alcott’s sensation novella “Behind a Mask,” overacting is a deliberate strategy for enabling the heroine to escape injustice: “If women are trapped within feminine scripts of childishness and victimization, Alcott suggests, they can unmask these roles only by deliberately overacting them” (Showalter 50). Judith Fetterley, as well, has identified “Behind a Mask” as a “radical critique of the cultural constructs of ‘femininity’ and ‘little womanhood,’ exposing them as roles women must play, masks they must put on, in order to survive” (Fetterley, “Impersonating ‘Little Women’ 2).⁴ It is not only Jean Muir of “Behind a Mask” who adopts this strategy, however. Ethel, Jo, and Anne all overact feminine submission when they feel they have no options. Moreover, the overacting is also a moment when the performative, constituting element of gender play which permeates the novels is made explicit and problematized.

Ethel is the most painfully honest of the three characters, rarely taking pleasure in negotiating relationships or having fun with people’s expectations like Anne and Jo. For Ethel, acting in a feminine manner would seem dishonest and lacking in integrity. She watches her sister Flora manipulate the Ladies’ Committee and comments, “I hate all this management and contrivance. It would be more honest to speak our minds, and not pretend to agree with them” (332). Yet, significantly at the beginning of the novel, Ethel adopts a restrained attitude after her governess chastises her, an act which underscores the performative nature of all of her behaviour:

Wriggling fearfully on the wide window-seat on which she had precipitated herself, and kicking at the bar of the table, by which manifestation she of course succeeded

in deferring her hopes, by a reproof which caused her to draw herself into a rigid melancholy attitude, a sort of penance of decorum, but a rapid motion of the eyelids, a tendency to crack the joints of the fingers, and an unquietness at the ends of her shoes, betraying the digits therein contained. (Yonge 1)

Ethel contains her restlessness, acts the quiet girl to escape further reproof. Even though Ethel makes grand claims for integrity, she puts on a show of feminine decorum when necessary. That she adopts femininity here suggests that she actively constructs herself otherwise in other moments.

Unlike Ethel, Jo delights in acting. She throws herself into role-playing to an extreme when she goes visiting with Amy, which highlights the extent to which Jo's gender inscriptions are always performative. In this chapter, the repressive quality of femininity for Jo makes itself clear:

While Amy dressed, she issued her orders, and Jo obeyed them; not without entering her protest, however, for she sighed as she rustled into her new organdie, frowned darkly at herself as she tied her bonnet strings in an irreproachable bow, wrestled vigourously with pins as she put on her collar, wrinkled up her features generally as she shook out the handkerchief, whose embroidery was as irritating to her nose as the present mission was to her feelings; and when she had squeezed hers hands into tight gloves with two buttons and a tassel, as the last touch of elegance, she turned to Amy with an imbecile expression of countenance, saying meekly,--

“I'm perfectly miserable; but if you consider me presentable, I die happy.”

(Alcott 289)

The image of feminine dress here suggests that femininity is oppressive and almost violent. Jo must rustle, wrestle, shake, squeeze, and meekly submit to Amy's orders. Amy not only dresses Jo up for the part, but directs her behaviour. Before visiting the Chesters, Amy lectures Jo about putting on her “best deportment”: “Don't make any of your abrupt

remarks, or do anything odd, will you? Just be calm, cool and quiet,--that's safe and lady-like" (Alcott 289). Jo rises to the challenge: "I've played the part of a prim young lady on the stage, and I'll try it off. My powers are great" (Alcott 290). Mischievously, Jo overacts: "She sat with every limb gracefully composed, every fold correctly draped, calm as a summer sea, cool as a snowdrop, and as silent as a sphinx" (Alcott 290). When the Chesters labour to draw her out, she will not respond beyond a "Yes" or a "no," much to Amy's chagrin.

As they head to the Lamb's, Amy tries another tactic: "Try to be sociable at the Lambs, gossip as other girls do, and be interested in dress, and flirtations, and whatever nonsense comes up" (Alcott 290). Again, Jo is delighted by the direction: "I'll imitate what is called a 'charming girl'; I can do it for I have Miss Chester as a model, and I'll improve upon her" (Alcott 290). Needless to say, Amy watches her sister "skim into the next drawing-room, kiss all the young ladies with effusion, beam graciously upon the young gentleman, and join in the chat with a spirit which amazed the beholder" (Alcott 290). Unfortunately for Amy, Jo entertains by telling personal stories which cause Amy much embarrassment. She so overdoes the friendliness that Amy feels "a strong desire to laugh and cry at the same time" (Alcott 293), and members of the party believed that she was making fun of Miss Chester (Alcott 299). At the next house, Amy leaves Jo to be herself, and Jo quickly surrounds herself with the children and their things. Because she had overplayed her roles to the point of ridicule, she managed to manipulate Amy into leaving her alone.

However, like Ethel, Jo reveals honesty at Aunt March's, the girls' next visit. Amy is helping with the Chester's fair, just as Flora helps with the Ladies' Committee's fair. Both Ethel and Jo are disgusted by the social commotion the fair causes. Jo claims, "I don't like favours; they oppress and make me feel like a slave; I'd rather do everything for myself, and be perfectly independent" (Alcott 297). Because she makes this declaration in

front of Aunt March, Amy and not Jo is asked to accompany Aunt March to Europe. The text indicates that too much honesty and too much independence does not pay off.

Anne, too, overacts when she has no choice but to behave in a manner contrary to her feelings. Like Ethel and Jo's, Anne's overacting indicates that all her behaviour is performative. She turns for her material to the language of the romances she reads voraciously. When Anne loses her temper with Mrs. Lynde, for example, she is sent to her room until she agrees to apologize. She refuses to do so, however. After her adopted parent Matthew convinces her not to stay in her room like a martyr, Anne's apology is overdone to the point of parody. Anne is "rapt and radiant" to Marilla's consternation until she reaches Mrs. Lynde's side: "Then the radiance vanished. Mournful penitence appeared on every feature. Before a word was spoken Anne suddenly went down on her knees before the astonished Mrs. Rachel and held out her hands beseechingly" (Montgomery 73). The apology that follows is melodramatic and humourous, but most disturbing is the fact that "Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation--was reveling in the thoroughness of her abasement" (Montgomery 74). Anne acts as a penitent romance heroine, a role she has most certainly learned from her reading, to distance herself from the oppressive injustice of her circumstance--being locked up until she apologizes to someone who called her ugly--and thus can turn it to a kind of pleasure. Anne, like Ethel and Jo, uses melodramatic acting in order to negotiate her often unjust everyday treatment. Each heroine consciously performs the role expected of her when faced with no choice. This performance not only shows that gender--always a facet of the role the heroine is expected to play--is a construction but it also highlights the heroines' agency in negotiating to have their difference accepted at other moments.

Negotiating gender identity

That the girls can enact the appropriate feminine roles if they choose or if they are presented with no other options shows that they are actively choosing not to accept these

roles at other times. While Butler would argue against this interpretation by pointing out that no a priori self exists to make the conscious choice, and I agree, I suggest that the heroines' constructions of identity that conflict with traditional femininities reveal the girls' abilities to negotiate and change the cultural scripts. Susan Hekman's discussion about the "discursive subject," which I mentioned in the introduction, illuminates the extent to which the choices the girls make within their limited sphere is an active agency that should not be discounted, even while the circumscribed position of the girls may be regretted.⁵ Hekman explains that, while "subjectivities are products of the discourses present to subjects, not removed from or preceding them. . . . Agents are subjects that create, that construct unique combinations of elements in expressive ways" (203). From the discursive formations available to the individual girls, the options they see as possible, they select multiple identities. Karla Walters believes that "[i]n Little Women the heroines progress from being inadequate captive victims to consciously choosing their respective destinies. In the process, they also acquire some essential survival skills" (158). Walters recognizes the extent to which Jo and her sisters make decisions about their respective identities. Likewise, Carolyn Heilbrun points out that Jo is the symbolic father of her family "because there was no other model" Jo could feel comfortable emulating (21). Jo wants a man's autonomy. Like Jo, both Ethel and Anne also recognize that the traditional feminine roles do not hold fulfillment for them. All three girls quest for identity within the limited spheres available. They negotiate for an active role that also receives approbation from their community. By calling traditional gender roles into question and by constantly articulating what constitutes femininity, the novels show gender to be socially constructed. In doing so, the texts also open a space for negotiation, for change: if feminine identity needs to be continually expressed, as Butler suggests, then it is also continually open to new possibilities.

From the beginning of The Daisy Chain, Ethel has trouble conforming to the gender roles prescribed by her society, which points up the constructedness of these roles. Ethel is

continually described as boyish, emphasizing how far she is from the expected role. She sports a masculine name. Ethel, though feminine, is short for Etheldred, a variation on the name of an English king,⁶ and her family occasionally calls her King Etheldred affectionately. Furthermore, Ethel is not conventionally attractive: “a thin, lank, angular, sallow girl, just fifteen, trembling from head to foot with restrained eagerness” (Yonge 1). Ethel’s behaviour, too, is remarked on as unladylike. When she gets mud on her gown, she is criticized by her father and brother. Then the maid exclaims, “I do declare you are just like one of the boys” (Yonge 52). Similarly, when Ethel asks her sister not to “murder” some poetry she is reciting, Miss Winter, the governess, responds that “all that a gentleman may say, may not be a precedent for a young lady” (Yonge 58). Furthermore, when Ethel tries to help the sister read the poetry in a more poetical fashion, she is reproved by the governess again: “It is not what we wish for in a young lady” (Yonge 59). After Ethel has been convinced that she should give up her Latin and Greek studies, because her duties are overwhelming, she remarks to Norman: “I was just going to say I hated being a woman, and having these tiresome little trifles--my duty--instead of learning, which is yours, Norman.” To which Norman responds, “I’m glad you did not Being a learned lady would be bad!” (Yonge 164). The irony here is multifaceted. Ethel, a girl without any formal schooling, has been able to keep up with her brother’s studies, and he is the head of his school and a year her senior. No one comments on the significance of this accomplishment. Secondly, in claiming that she is not going to say how she hates being a woman, Ethel says it. Norman seems a bit obtuse because of his response. She hates being a woman (164) and wishes she were a boy (224). Norman also wishes she were a boy so her verses could be shown (19).

Not only does this novel insistently repeat Ethel’s inability to behave in a feminine fashion, but The Daisy Chain also exposes gender as a social construct by representing gender bending, by showing characters who do not fulfill traditional gender roles. Ethel’s younger sister, Mary, for example, is referred to as one of ‘the boys,’ along with Tom and

Harry. The difference between Richard and Ethel tells much about the extent to which one's sex does not determine one's temperament. The person who instructs Ethel in feminine behaviour and decorum and, arguably, one of the more 'feminine' characters in the novel is a man--her brother Richard. The narrator insists that "[n]o two people could be much more unlike than Richard and Etheldred May" (48). Richard, unlike Ethel, greatly resembles his angelic and domestic mother, and, significantly, he is introduced into the novel only after Mrs. May's death. He is described as having a "small trim figure, and fresh, fair young face" (29), a decidedly feminine description unlike that of Ethel who is "thin, lank, angular, sallow" (1). In many respects, Richard replaces the figure of Mrs. May with his calm countenance and steady demeanour in the face of family calamities. His nurturing abilities are a foil for Ethel's:

Richard was a great comfort, watching over the little ones more like a sister than a brother. Ethel was ashamed of herself when she saw him taking thought for them, tying Blanche's bonnet, putting Aubrey's gloves on, teaching them to put away their Sunday toys, as if he meant them to be as neat and precise as himself. (40)

Unable to perform domestic tasks as Richard does, Ethel feels a failure.

The feminine Richard instructs Ethel in domestic duty. He teaches her to thread a needle, tie a bow, and stick a pin. Paradigmatic of his success is his attempt to teach her tea-making. She tries to avoid the task by claiming she will fail, itself an interesting strategy to rid herself of duties she finds irksome. Richard perseveres and Ethel produces tea that is "all right," according to a supercilious Flora (69). Most telling in this passage is the narrator's assessment of the dynamic between Ethel and her elder sister, Flora:

Flora knew that, though clever and with more accomplishments, she could not surpass Ethel in intellectual attainments, but she was certainly far more valuable in

the house, and had been proved to have just the qualities in which her sister was most deficient. She did not relish hearing that Ethel wanted nothing but attention to be more than her equal. (69)

After Flora has left the household to marry, Ethel must take on the household duties that she had always disclaimed ability in. Not surprisingly, by the end of the novel, Richard compliments her on her “very good” tea (555). Previous to Flora’s marriage, Ethel could not excel in domestic chores because they were Flora’s domain. While she never proves to be as skilled in domestic duties as Flora, Ethel learns to perform the expected tasks.

Ethel seems unable to adopt a feminine, domestic role, and Richard excels in this role, because they model themselves after the parent whom they resemble. Dr. May, of course, is the patriarch of the May family, and the child who most resembles him is his daughter. He is described like Ethel, “lank and bony,” “sallow,” “thin,” “nearsighted,” and “plain” (10,11). Ethel is “almost an exaggeration of the doctor’s peculiarities” (11). Not only does she resemble him physically, but she also mirrors his personality. Dr. May sees in Ethel his own inadequacies, and he attacks her for them. For example, when Ethel neglects to care for Margaret adequately, Dr. May berates her. The narrator points out twice in this passage that his outburst is unjust (62). Another incident occurs when Ethel’s little brother catches fire under her care while she is distracted by a book. After a violently emotional outburst, Dr. May confesses that he sees his own faults in her. His carelessness and heedlessness, which were covered up while his wife was alive, now make it difficult for him to manage the family. However, Dr. May also acknowledges Ethel’s superiority to him in overcoming these flaws. When Dr. Spencer reunites with Dr. May, he comments, “How like that girl is to you! She is yourself!” To which Dr. May replies, “Such a self as I never was!” (402).

Although Ethel mirrors her father’s looks and behaviour, she cannot follow in his footsteps because she is female. While he may wear spectacles to counteract his nearsightedness, she is not allowed to do so. When she requests the doctor lend her a pair

so she may enjoy a walk, the family rallies together to prevent her. The doctor recalls a caricature drawn by a schoolboy of "the little Doctor in petticoats." Ethel distinguishes her position from her father's by crying, "I wish you were obliged to go without them yourself, papa!" (14). He is not obliged, however, because he is male.

Because she identifies with her father yet cannot emulate him, Ethel locates other ways of approximating his position in the world. Ethel skirts the limitations imposed on her because of her sex and negotiates for an identity connected with patriarchal power, effectively revising the feminine script. One theme in the novel is who will follow the doctor's career path. Richard certainly would not do, as he lacks cleverness, and Norman lacks the nerves, so the duty of emulating father falls to a very reluctant Tom. Clearly, however, Ethel is the best candidate if the option had been available to her. Her continual identification with her father leads to her respect for patriarchal authority: "She looked up to her father with the reverence and enthusiasm of one like-minded" (143). Because she recognizes that power lies in a patriarchal role, that and not a feminine domestic role is what Ethel identifies with. By becoming her father's dearest support and sole confidante, Ethel manages to get as close as possible to the patriarchal role. On two occasions, she proves to be the voice of reason during small family crises. When Harry has been misbehaving, Ethel believes the older children should tell Dr. May. They resolve not to bother him with the trivial incident and Harry comes to confess himself. Later, when Tom is misbehaving, Ethel again counsels her siblings to confide in their father. They do not take her advice, although Margaret acknowledges that "Ethel's rule is right in principle" (145). Unfortunately, Tom's delinquency increases until Dr. May is shocked to hear of it. Margaret takes the blame: "Ethel told us we were very wrong, and I wish we had followed her advice. It was by far the best, but we were afraid of vexing you" (174). Dr. May's anger and despair over the situation escalating without his management proves a chastisement to the older children who felt they knew best.

144

As the novel progresses, moreover, Ethel becomes increasingly important to her father. Margaret feels that she is “less necessary” to him and that “the fulness of his confidence was passing to Ethel” (284). Ethel has become “his chief companion” (284). Ethel’s second vow—her first is to establish a church at Cocks Moor—is never to leave her father. Couched in biblical language akin to a wedding vow, Ethel’s resolution to become her father’s comfort shows that she has chosen the role of spinster daughter: “Leave him who might, she would never forsake him; nothing but the will of Heaven should part them” (350). However, because Dr. May represents the power of the household, to be his confidante and sounding board brings the relatively powerless children closer to the power position: whichever child can claim the closest relationship with Dr. May not only can influence his decisions but stands in for him when he is not present, just as Mrs. May did. Indeed, after the death of Mrs. May, the children seem to compete for her role in the family. Richard, Margaret, and Flora all believe that they have become necessary for household management. When Flora shows discontent that Ethel is the favoured child, Margaret says, “If papa does find her his best companion and friend, we ought to be glad of it” (285). By the end of the novel, Margaret acknowledges that it is Ethel and not herself “who is really necessary” to Dr. May (563).

This competition for the father’s sole affections vibrates with incestuous overtones, suggesting both that strong affections can only be articulated within a heterosexual, romantic paradigm and that any role for women outside of this paradigm—a single woman, for example—is difficult to inscribe in the limited cultural scripts available.⁷ As well, the incestuous relationship emphasizes the gender trouble Ethel causes: she manages to emulate both mother and father, feminine and masculine. Margaret and Flora are passed over by their father once they become engaged. When Ethel embarks on her London romance with Norman Ogilvie, her father arrives and inadvertently usurps the young lover. He takes the chair “which had, hitherto, been appropriated by her cousin—a chair that cut her nook off from the rest of the world, and made her the exclusive possession of the occupant” (383).

Impatient with her father's attentions, Ethel berates herself for being "unkind, ungrateful, undutiful" (385). She has made her vow to him, is his "exclusive possession," and must banish thoughts of Ogilvie. Ethel, the child most like her father, has succeeded her mother in his affections. She has managed to combine masculine and feminine roles, showing her delicate negotiation of gender.

Ethel's precarious balance between masculine and feminine roles appears in her negotiation of her ambitions as well. From the outset, the novel's theme has been to disparage distinction, to overcome the impulse to be first in accomplishments, love, or glory. Ethel, the most noble May child, seems entirely unmotivated by this desire. Yet, as we have seen in her relationship with her father, she is accomplished in many areas. She becomes the female head of the household, the proxy representation of patriarchal power. She succeeds in establishing a school at Cocks Moor and in building a church for the beleaguered village. In one of the most interesting and unusual passages at the centre of the novel, the text moves in startling fashion from past to present tense. The May children play at blowing bubbles, and the narrator relates the action in present tense, although this tense is used nowhere else. Bubbles are used to symbolize ambition. For example, Ethel tells Norman that "it was always a bubble" of hers that he should attempt the Newdigate Prize (343). She also explains how she was cured of writing for publication by Richard's inadvertent criticisms of her work. She still writes, she claims, but does not try to make "bubbles" of her efforts (343). When Norman achieves the Newdigate Prize, he sends a note to Ethel: "My peacock bubble has flown over the house" (367). Interesting, then, that in this bubble-blowing scene, positioned as it is in the centre of the novel and written jarringly in present tense, Ethel does not participate. Rather, she returns to the May household, interrupting the play, and the narrative shifts back to past tense. She is surprised at the pastime and, particularly, at Norman's light-hearted involvement. Dr. May says: "See the applause gained by a proud bubble that flies" (339), and Norman philosophically remarks on "[t]he whole world being bent on making painted bubbles fly

over the house” (339). But not Ethel, the text implies. She did not participate in the whimsical event, and her presence restores the text to normalcy.

However, more than her other siblings, Ethel is an unmitigated success at blowing grand bubbles which do not self-destruct. While she is continually encouraged to contain and repress her ambitions because they are unfeminine, she does not. She aspires to be a scholar and keeps up with her brother Norman—a year older and top student—in his studies: “It being her great desire to be even with him in all his studies, and though eleven months younger, she had never yet fallen behind him” (67). She even corrects Norman in his mistakes (18). Her mother subtly discourages her from reading Greek (6), and Ethel “would not, for the world, that any one should guess at her classical studies” (7). She despairs of her home-schooling and her governess’s and tutor’s bland lessons (58), which she still must learn. It is not surprising that Ethel experiences anxiety about her extracurricular studies, as Dr. May threatens to ban her learning when he is angry (62, 123). Still, Ethel displays cunning by maintaining academics as an insistant focus of her identity. She manages to exact a lesson on navigation from Mr. Ernescliffe early on which is paradigmatic for her ability to gain knowledge in areas atypical for a young woman. She finds a book of logarithms for Mr. Ernescliffe and questions him. His response is condescending, but she gets what she wants: “He replied, smiling at the impossibility of her understanding, but she wrinkled her brown forehead, hooked her long nose, and spent the next hour in amateur navigation” (7). When the family attempts to prevent her from overtaxing herself by convincing her to give up Norman’s studies, she wishes that learning, and not “tiresome little trifles,” was her duty, as it was Norman’s (164). She realizes that she cannot achieve what Norman does, simply because of her sex. Academic honour is not an option for her.

In the face of being barred from exercising patriarchal power and academic prowess, Ethel finds an acceptable arena for constructing an identity. After visiting the poor community of Cocksmoor, she declares, “[t]here would be a worthy ambition! . . .

Let us propose that aim to ourselves, to build a Church on Cocks Moor" (22). Even this most charitable aspiration in young Ethel garners a reproofing look from her governess (22). Her first "vow" is to Cocks Moor, made before her vow to her father. In the interim, however, Ethel resolves to set up a school in the village. In so doing, she manages to establish academics as a focus of her identity in a manner that is generally acceptable. This time, she faces opposition from Norman who thinks the schoolhouse unhealthy. She perseveres. She receives approbation from family friend and clergyman, Mr. Wilmot: "I do believe that hard homely work, such as this school-keeping, is the best outlet for what might run to extravagance--more especially as you say the hope of it has already been an incentive to improvement in home duties" (136). Wilmot's comment provides a gloss to Ethel's improvement in the May household: she recognizes that she must perform domestically in order to be allowed to perform in a more public sphere. Wilmot later points out that the Cocks Moor project has elevated the whole family (523). While Ethel needs and accepts help for achieving her goals, one comment about the Ladies' Committee's involvement shows how she views her work in Cocks Moor. She laments to Margaret: "It is like having all the Spaniards and savages spoiling Robinson Crusoe's desert island" (301). Ethel views herself as a Robinson Crusoe: Cocks Moor is the island of which she is the sole renovator, despairing of interference. She exclaims, "interference with *my* Cocks Moor" (301). As much as the text implies that Ethel does not seek to blow bubbles, much less receive applause for them, her proprietorial feelings about her project and her sense of herself as the lone worker on a desert island suggest the opposite. Indeed, when the church is raised, Ethel is acknowledged as the driving force behind the event. Due to Margaret's illness, Ethel misses the celebratory luncheon and the accolades heaped upon her in her absence: "She did not guess that, in the sight of others, she was not the nobody that she believed herself" (572). While Ethel confronts contradiction between how she is masculine-identified and her inability to pursue masculine goals because of her sex, she negotiates for an identity which allows her to achieve power and education within the

gender regulations. She has successfully revised traditional femininity, as represented by her mother or sister Margaret, for example.

To a greater degree than Ethel, Jo does not want to accept a traditional feminine role because she recognizes its limitations. Like Ethel, Jo is described as boyish, which emphasizes the constructedness of gender roles: they are not a natural product of one's sex. Her nickname marks her gender orientation, although "Jo" is short for a very feminine "Josephine." Her appearance is also unfeminine: Jo is "tall, thin and brown, and reminded one of a colt; for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, which were very much in her way" (Alcott 4). Her mouth is "decided," her nose "comical" and her eyes "sharp" as well as "fierce, funny or thoughtful" (Alcott 4). The descriptions indicate that she is decidedly uncomfortable with the feminine gender expected of her: "Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a fly-away look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman and didn't like it" (Alcott 4).

Like Ethel, Jo's behaviour also transgresses the feminine ideal. As she whistles, her sister Amy says, "Don't Jo; it's so boyish" (Alcott 3). When her sister Meg agrees that Jo should remember that she is a young lady, Jo responds: "It's bad enough to be a girl, any-way, when I like boy's games, and work, and manners. I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy" (Alcott 3). Beth points out that Jo should be content with her boy's name and "playing brother to us girls" (Alcott 3). Other examples abound. Mr. Lawrence remarks to himself that Jo seems to understand his boy, Laurie, "as well as if she had been one herself" (Alcott 54). When Laurie wishes his tutor to see Jo home, she replies, "I ain't a young lady" (Alcott 55). Even when Jo wants to cry, she feels tears are "an unmanly weakness" and therefore represses her grief (Alcott 76).

From the outset, Jo is not only constructed by the narrative as boyish, but also identifies herself in this way, thus causing overt gender trouble. She faces a contradiction, however, between her masculine identification and the limitations imposed on her by her

sex. She wishes she could go to college like Laurie (29) and laments that she cannot run away with him. She says, "If I was a boy, we'd run away together, and have a capital time; but as I'm a miserable girl, I must be proper, and stop at home" (213). While she adds, "[p]runes and prisms' are my doom, and I may as well make up my mind to it" (213), she certainly does not limit her options to girlish concerns. Because her father is away at the civil war, Jo can easily become the man of the family. She establishes that she likes "boy's games, and work, and manners." The next sentence states clear identification with her father: "I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy, and it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with papa, and I can only stay at home and knit like a poky old woman" (3). She wishes options were available to her so she could join him in the war, imagining being a nurse or a drummer (8). In the face of her father's absence and her inability to go to war with him, Jo identifies herself as, what her father terms, "son Jo" (223). She behaves in a "gentlemanly" fashion (see 2, 25, 28 for examples). In the girls' amateur theatre, Jo happily plays the male roles. She describes herself to Laurie as a "business man" (55). Even after her father's return, Jo continues to self-identify as male rather than female. When she realizes she is losing Meg to John Brooke, Jo claims she "will bear it like a man" (226). Around Laurie's college friends, "Jo felt quite in her element, and found it very difficult to refrain from imitating the gentlemanly attitudes, phrases, and feats which seemed more natural to her than the decorums prescribed for young ladies" (239). As Beth grows increasingly ill, she admits to Jo that Jo is a source of strength to her. Jo shows that she has accepted domestic duty, but with a twist: "If anything is amiss at home, I'm your man" (322). One of Jo's most sacrificial, and thus most womanly, moments also carries a contradiction. She sells her mane of hair for money to help her ill father. She has turned tables by becoming the provider. In addition, the new haircut seems to cement her boyishness by adding a visual as well as a behavioural dimension to this identity. Her tears over losing her one beauty, an overt foothold on femininity, suggest that she is not as committed to the "son Jo" role as she

appears. Indeed, she gets a bad cold because of her short hair, suggesting that both womanly sacrifice and a greater degree of boyishness have detrimental results. Jo instead negotiates for the ambiguous space in-between.

This ambiguity of gender roles is illuminated by the central boy character, Laurie, and the gender-bending in the novel both exposes the constructedness of gender and allows a space for negotiation. Just as Richard proved to be Ethel's model of femininity, Laurie is Jo's model of masculinity. Interestingly enough, Laurie is not a particularly boyish boy. Instead, he and Jo blur the lines between masculine and feminine. Upon first meeting, they share their distaste for their names, reflective of their distaste for their gender identification. Laurie prefers to be called by this nickname than "Theodore," which his schoolmates simplified to "Dora" (27). Both of Laurie's nicknames are traditionally feminine, whereas Jo's nickname is traditionally masculine. In contrast to Jo's lanky boyishness, Laurie's appearance conveys a well-manicured sense of girlishness: "Curly black hair, brown skin, big black eyes, long nose, nice teeth, little hands and feet" (29). The similarity of the young people's height furthers the gender ambiguity. His restlessness and "hatred of subjection" is much like Jo's (144). Where Jo enjoys boy's games, Laurie longs to play girls' games (140). After Jo crops her hair, it becomes curly like Laurie's and she touches her hat "à la Laurie." Jo says she will teach Laurie to knit (146) and he agrees to teach her to fence (149). Laurie has the independence that Jo desires, and Jo participates in an interdependent family as Laurie longs to do. Both are willing, even eager, to step outside the prescribed gender roles.

As a self-identified "boy," Jo does not feel romantically towards Laurie, her gender-ambiguous double. Instead, she expresses a homoerotic desire for her family, particularly her sister Meg. Like the incestuous love between father and daughter in The Daisy Chain, homoerotic love in Little Women carries a double meaning: there are no cultural scripts for expressing the intensity of sibling love, so Jo must borrow from the heterosexual, romantic paradigm; as well, because of her fierce independence and refusal to

entertain the possibility of marriage for herself, Jo adopts the romantic script, much revised, to justify her own stance as a single woman.⁸ In taking on the male roles in the March family plays, Jo can play lover to her sisters, a role she explicitly desires. Arguably, Jo learns to express the intensity of her love for her siblings through these dramatic scripts. In a letter to her mother, Jo writes about Meg: “She gets prettier everyday, and I’m in love with her sometimes” (170). Jo’s feelings for Meg complicate her responses to the developing relationship between Meg and John Brooke: Jo suggests an “odd arrangement” to Marmee by confessing her desire to “marry Meg myself and keep her safe in the family” (203). She then acts like a bereaved lover when Meg and John agree to marry. With “a little quiver in her voice,” she says, “You can’t know how hard it is for me to give up Meg” (234). She must, however. Later, when Marmee shows concern for Jo’s loneliness and reassures Jo that “the best lover of all” will come, Jo exclaims, “Mothers are the *best* lovers in the world” (437), suggesting that her homoerotic interest has shifted.

That her homoerotic desire cannot be satisfied in the narrative, suggests that Jo’s masculine self-identification is limited. Regardless of her attempts to make herself into a man, Jo must be a girl. She is, however, a girl with the ambition “to do something very splendid” (38). When the girls discuss their dreams and aspirations, Jo declares that she wants to do “something heroic, or wonderful,” adding, “I think I shall write books, and get rich and famous” (143). Her options are limited: she cannot go to war or to college, for example, because of her sex. She works as a companion for her Aunt Josephine, a traditionally feminine career which Jo despises. She also leaves home, in an adventurous move, to work as a governess and sewer in New York. Although this job is traditionally feminine, it offers the possibility for more power than the position of companion. She explains in a letter home that, with effort, she is causing “my little twigs to bend, as I could wish” (34): she is able to shape her students. The possibility of spinsterhood looms before her, and the text clearly presents it as a dismal future. Jo sighs when mulling over this apparently certain fate, “as if the prospect was uninviting” (440). Indeed, the narrator

pauses to lecture the reader on the common mistreatment of old maids, illuminating the poverty, lack of respect, and loneliness engendered by this lifestyle.

In the face of the options available to her, Jo's marriage to Professor Bhaer is not surprising. She cannot be a boy, so she marries a man who is, in her words, "like a boy" (337). Furthermore, she then gives birth to boys and, ultimately, establishes a school for boys. While she cannot continue to pursue personal boyishness, Jo effectively locates an identity for herself that is grounded in boyish behaviour. She also negotiates with Bhaer so she does not lose her independence: "I'm to carry my share, Friedrich, and help to earn the home" (480). She will not entirely relinquish boyishness or her role as provider in the home.

Her role as provider is perhaps the most interesting of Jo's negotiations and is, again, a movement into a masculine domain, but one that creates gender ambiguity. Her father proves ineffectual at providing for his family: his physical absence in the first volume is mirrored by little narrative attention paid to him in the second; his illness suggests inadequacy; and his financial mismanagement reduces the family to relative poverty. Because of her father's inability, Jo can move into this role. Her brotherly behaviour towards her sisters is one expression of her concern with the welfare of the family, and selling her hair to earn money for her ill father is another. Most importantly, however, her writing becomes the means for paying the bills in the March household. Her writing does not meet with open approbation. She writes fiction, "much to the disquiet of her mother, who always looked a little anxious when 'genius took to burning'" (267). As well, Amy burns Jo's manuscript in vengeance, an act which shows both that the family recognizes the importance of Jo's writing to Jo herself, and that the family does not fully respect its importance. Jo's father also admonishes her for the literary style she chooses (268). Writing becomes a source of empowerment nonetheless: "She did earn several [cheques] that year, and began to feel herself a power in the house; for by the magic of a pen, her 'rubbish' turned into comforts for them all" (269). When Jo's first novel is conditionally

accepted, her father counsels her not to revise. The narrator's tone conveys a touch of contempt for Mr. March by adding: "And he practiced as he preached, having waited patiently thirty years for fruit of his own to ripen, and being in no haste to gather it, even now, when it was sweet and mellow" (269-70). Tellingly, Jo does not take her father's advice. Instead, she revises and publishes her novel, proving herself a success where her father obviously is not.

Jo's leap into sensation fiction causes her anxiety because she realizes that she will not receive approval from her loved ones. Her motivation for publishing is still financial gain: she wishes to take the ailing Beth to the mountains. The narrator exposes Jo's mercenary streak: "She soon became interested in her work--for her emaciated purse grew stout" (349). The disapprobation arises from the fact that Jo is a woman and, in writing sensation stories, "she was beginning to desecrate some of the womanliest attributes of a woman's character" (349). Even in writing, she must find an appropriate outlet. The professor lectures her, indirectly, on the evils of sensation literature, and Jo stops writing. However, she does not stop writing altogether. Her mother, typically anxious about Jo's literary labours, encourages Jo to write in order to battle despondency (435). Jo does and, "with no thought of fame or money," achieves unprecedented success (436). While the content of her successful stories is not made explicit, it would seem to be of a humorous, domestic nature and on a rather small scale, as opposed to the impassioned, grand sensation stories. In several paragraphs, Jo's new literary turn is described as "the little story," "a simple little story," "her little stories," "such humble wanderers," and "like dutiful children." The limitation and domestic thrust implied by these rapidly repeated labels shows that Jo's writing is acceptable only when it adheres to a more feminine literary ideal. She can be the provider, she can write, but only if she maintains "womanly attributes." Even Bhaer is not altogether opposed to her writing. Her poem, "In the Garret" brings him to her side after she publishes it. He suggests interest in her other writings by indicating that he wishes to "read all the brown book in which she keeps her

little secrets” (279). By employing a more feminine literary style, Jo receives acceptance for her writing, a talent that empowers her financially and spiritually. Like Ethel, Jo faces contradiction between her masculine identity and her inability to follow masculine pursuits because of her sex. By blurring the lines between masculine and feminine identities, however, Jo negotiates for an identity that allows her to achieve boyishness and literary success.

In Anne of Green Gables, Anne seems fully aware of the struggle to define herself from the options available, showing the text’s understanding of the constructedness of identity. She says to Diana: “There’s such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I’m such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn’t be half so interesting” (161). One of Anne’s major struggles stems from her romance-reading which has provided her with an impossible ideal of femininity. Anne, while not described as boyish, is presented as rather unattractive: she wore a “very short, very tight, very ugly dress of yellowish gray wincey” and sported “two braids of very thick, decidedly red hair,” her face is “small, white and thin, also much freckled” (Montgomery 11). However, for the “extraordinary observer,” Montgomery details Anne’s non-superficial features, something which neither Yonge nor Alcott explicitly do: Anne has “spirit and vivacity” and no “commonplace soul” (Montgomery 11).

Also demonstrating the constructedness of gender identity, Anne’s reading provides her with an understanding of what it means to be a woman. For an orphaned child who was not properly educated, Anne has consumed a surprisingly vast repertoire of literary works (see 40-41, for example). Anne faces a contradiction by desiring but being unable to imitate the feminine role models she finds in literature. From the outset of the novel, she aspires to be a beautiful, ladylike heroine. She tells Matthew:

I don’t ever expect to be a bride myself. I’m so homely nobody will ever want to marry me--unless it might be a foreign missionary. I suppose a foreign missionary

mightn't be too particular. But I do hope that some day I shall have a white dress.

That is my highest ideal of earthly bliss. I just love pretty clothes.

(Montgomery 13)

Anne wants to fit the girl role so well that, when Marilla tells her that she talks too much for a little girl, she “held her tongue so obediently and thoroughly that her continued silence made Marilla rather nervous” (Montgomery 33). When Anne first prays to God, she includes in her prayer the line, “Please let me stay at Green Gables, and please let me be good-looking when I grow up” (Montgomery 51). Where Ethel and Jo rebel against the girlish behaviour required of them, Anne struggles to fit in.

Most tellingly, Anne always acknowledges how her real life fails to match up to the romantic expectations she has developed from her reading. She imagines herself with “a beautiful rose leaf complexion [which might, if taken literally, be green!] and lovely starry violet eyes” but has more difficulty picturing her red locks “a glorious black, black as the raven’s wing” (16). Her hair, she claims, is her “lifelong sorrow,” which is a phrase she picked up through her reading. From her extensive reading, she forms an idea about femininity which she knows she does not fit. She asks Matthew: “Which would you rather be if you had the choice--divinely beautiful or dazzlingly clever or angelically good?” (17). Anne herself does not know which option she would select if she had the choice. However, because she has already resigned herself to being homely and points out that she’ll never be angelically good, only one option remains. She will be dazzlingly clever.

Anne’s cleverness shows itself in her manipulation of romance discourse. When Marilla insists on Anne’s apology to Rachel Lynde, Anne replies: “You can shut me up in a dark damp dungeon inhabited by snakes and toads and feed me only on bread and water and I shall not complain” (68). When finally apologizing to Mrs. Lynde, Anne draws upon her earlier language with Matthew to express herself: “You wouldn’t like to inflict a lifelong sorrow on a poor little orphan girl, would you, even if she had a dreadful temper?” (73). After Marilla confronts her about wearing flowers to church, Anne is cunning. She says:

“Maybe you’d better send me back to the asylum. That would be terrible; I don’t think I could endure it; most likely I would go into consumption; I’m so thin as it is, you see. But that would be better than being a trial to you” (85). Anne fully accepts the role of orphan and, using language gleaned from her reading, manipulates the role to suit her ends. Her need to express her own life in romantic terms diminishes when she begins writing romance stories (208, for example).

Anne’s habit of renaming also comes from her romance reading and subtly reveals her clever way of gaining a modicum of power in a world in which she is relatively powerless. From the White Way of Delight and Lake of Shining Waters and Lover’s Lane to Idlewild and Willowmere (a name she admits to borrowing from a book she read), Anne transforms the mundane into the grand, if in name only. She renames a fellow orphan with the unfortunate name Hepzibah Jenkins, Rosalie DeVere (18). Similarly, she wishes for Marilla to call her Cordelia, a much more romantic name than Anne (24). While the renaming exposes much about Anne’s need for beauty in a world of scarcity, it also is a source of power for her. She explains to Matthew that she gets a thrill when she finds an appropriate name (19). This thrill is reminiscent of Emily’s “flash” which occurs throughout Montgomery’s Emily of New Moon: that creative, foreshadowing power that is inexplicable and almost otherworldly. Anne’s “thrill” is a sense of power, echoed by Matthew’s peculiar response when asked if he experiences the same type of feeling. He says, “It always kind of gives me a thrill to see them ugly white grubs that spade up in the cucumber beds” (19). Anne carefully points out that there is no connection between beautiful ponds and grubs, but there is. Matthew’s thrill is the opposite side of Anne’s: she makes things lovely by using what power she has to do so, where he uncovers the ugly underside. In addition, the image conjured up by Matthew’s response is one of power—a man digging in the garden and exposing small, vulnerable grubs—which mirrors the power Anne feels over her environment when she renames it.

Similarly, Anne's imagination, fueled by her literary pastime, becomes a source for her indirect articulation of pain that cannot otherwise be articulated acceptably in a world where no one has time for the feelings of an orphan, particularly an unwanted girl. Her description of the trees outside the orphanage, for example, allows her to vent her sorrow over her own painful circumstances:

They just looked like orphans themselves, those trees did. It used to make me want to cry to look at them. I used to say to them, 'Oh, you *poor* little things! If you were out in a great big woods with other trees all around you and little mosses and Junebells growing over your roots and a brook not far away and birds singing in your branches, you could grow, couldn't you? But you can't where you are. I know exactly how you feel, little trees.' (15-16)

In this effusive dialogue with the trees, Anne manages to express her own sense of being stifled, her own impoverished environment, and the resulting anguish. Similarly, Anne's absorption in the picture, "Christ Blessing Little Children," triggers her imagination. She explains to Marilla that she saw herself as the little girl in the corner, "as if she didn't belong to anybody, like me" (56). What follows is Anne's thinly-veiled attempt to manipulate Marilla's emotions, as well as an honest, if slightly indirect, expression of her own feelings:

She looks lonely and sad, don't you think? I guess she hadn't any father or mother of her own. But she wanted to be blessed, too, so she just crept slyly up on the outside of the crowd, hoping nobody would notice her--except Him. I'm sure I know just how she felt. Her heart must have beat and her hands must have got cold, like mine did when I asked you if I could stay. (56)

Because her environment does not allow for a direct expression of her discontent, Anne negotiates to articulate her pain indirectly: she proves effective as well, by winning over both Marilla and Matthew.

Unlike Jo and Ethel, both of whom do not want to fulfill a feminine role, Anne's desire to be a proper little girl demonstrates her cleverness and her attempts to fit into the role expected of her. While Jo and Ethel identify with traditionally masculine pursuits, Anne does not consider male identity an option; rather, the only identity, besides girlhood, she toys with, is one connected with nature. She explains to Marilla that she would like to be a gull, a powerful image, at once suggestive of freedom, exploration, and the security of still being able to "fly back to one's nest" (42). Anne recognizes that her options are not so varied: if she wishes acceptance in the nest, she must contain herself and behave appropriately. Similarly, she expresses the wish to be the wind, another image of flying and autonomy (76-77). The joyous freedom suggested by images of birds and the wind is clearly not to be Anne's.

Instead, Marilla's firm determination to train the orphan to be "a useful little thing" (47) becomes the novel's focus. Training Anne to be a proper little girl consists of Anne learning conscious artifice. Ironically, Marilla attempts to win compassion for Anne from Mrs. Lynde by reminding the older woman that Anne has "never been taught what is right" (66): "right" apparently means "dishonest." Marilla explains, when Anne has been discovered with real flowers in her hat at church, that she wants Anne to "behave like other little girls" (85). The other little girls, as Anne points out, sported artificial flowers. This is a telling image: because the artificial flowers are acceptable, the text seems to say, Anne must learn to be more conscious of her always artificial gender constructions. Emblematic of her need to conform to encoded gender behaviour is her "confession" to Marilla. She learns that she must confess to having taken Marilla's brooch even though she did not. Indeed, her "confession" is articulated by her "as if repeating a lesson she had learned" (99). Her rehearsed repetition of an identity deemed acceptable emphasizes how well she has learned the lesson of artifice and construction. Anne's "honesty" proves misguided in Avonlea, and the text asserts that she must acquire feminine discretion. Anne's reason for being unable to apologize to Mrs. Lynde is because she is not sorry; she admits that her

outburst was “a great satisfaction” (68), a response that is comic but inappropriate. In addition, Anne’s criticisms of the minister’s sermons echo Marilla’s own “secret, unuttered, critical thoughts” (83). Anne must learn to keep them secret if she is to be a proper little girl.

Unlike Ethel and Jo, then, Anne earnestly tries to achieve femininity; the text’s homoeroticism, however, is one example of how difficult this task is for Anne. Like Jo’s homoerotic love for Meg, Anne’s homoerotic love for Diana betrays a discomfort with the limited expression available for intense love between girls: Anne can only express the intensity through the heterosexual paradigm of marriage. After the girls are forced to part company, they exchange love letters that borrow heavily from the discourse of marriage and courtship. Diana writes, “I love you as much as ever,” and confesses that she tells “all her secrets” to Anne. Anne responds in kind and signs off with: “Yours until death us do part,” adding “I shall sleep with your letter under my pillow tonight” as a postscript (135). The marriage vow is repeated when Diana gives Anne a card with the following inscription:

If you love me as I love you

Nothing but death can part us two. (146)

The discourse of heterosexual romantic love permeates the text. After the raspberry cordial incident, which results in Diana’s drunkenness and Anne’s not being able to associate with her friend, Anne bids farewell to her friend in a highly romantic and sensual manner: “Will you promise faithfully never to forget me, the friend of your youth, no matter what dearer friends may caress thee?” (131). Anne takes a lock of Diana’s hair as a keepsake. Even the name “bosom friend,” by which they call each other, conjures up a physical as well as spiritual image. Anne claims to love Diana with “an *inextinguishable* love” (137) and weeps with bitterness over the thought that Diana will marry someday in the future: “I love Diana so, Marilla, I cannot live without her. But I know very well when we grow up that Diana will get married and go away and leave me” (119). The homoeroticism is highlighted again when Diana betrays jealousy of Anne’s friend at Queen’s: “Josie said you

were *infatuated* with her” (290). To reassure Diana, Anne says, “I feel as if it were joy enough to sit here and look at you” (290). The romantic language of courtship which ripples with sensuousness, places Anne in a male-identified role, as it did Jo. While Anne wants to achieve a feminine ideal, she faces a contradiction between her homoerotic desire and the behaviour expected of her.

Because Anne’s perceived feminine ideal is to embody one of three possible characteristics, which are presented as mutually exclusive—a woman can be divinely beautiful, dazzlingly clever, or angelically good—and Anne defaults to dazzlingly clever, she throws herself into this role. She learns her lessons well. From the moment she enters school, she focuses on becoming an accomplished student. The narrator remarks that although Anne’s first teacher is not very adept at his trade, “a pupil so inflexibly determined on learning as Anne was could hardly escape making progress under any kind of a teacher” (136). She develops a healthy rivalry with Gilbert, the top student in the class. Her attention to her studies garners her a spot in the class to prepare for the Queen’s entrance exam which she not only passes but places first, tying with Gilbert. Her time at Queen’s, where she takes a first-class teacher’s licence in one year rather than the usual two, proves extremely successful as well. She wins the Avery scholarship, four-year funding at Redmond University in Nova Scotia. Matthew says to Marilla, “Reckon you’re glad we kept her,” showing that Anne’s dazzling cleverness is indeed a way to win approbation (289).

However, Anne is also presented with the opportunity to prove herself angelically good. Her Queen’s experience seems to open up endless possibilities for Anne: “All the Beyond was hers with its possibilities lurking rosily in the oncoming years—each year a rose of promise to be woven into an immortal chaplet” (287). After Matthew’s death, however, Anne chooses to stay at Green Gables with Marilla. She has actively decided that this option holds the most benefit for her: “Anne’s horizons had closed in since the night she had sat [in her window] after coming home from Queen’s; but if the path set before her

feet was to be narrow she knew that flowers of quiet happiness would bloom along it” (308). She is empowered by the knowledge that she has chosen this option; she is not forced to remain home.

The effect of coherence

While I am arguing that identity is not fixed and that the heroines are constantly in the process of constructing themselves through the discursive mix available to them, I would also like to embrace contradiction myself by suggesting that, contrary to the contention of some critics, the girls do not change significantly over the course of the novels. They learn how to accommodate their communities, but they do not undergo dramatic character development. This position may seem to contradict my theoretical position that identity is fluid and ever-changing, that there is no *a priori*, essential self; but I do not believe that it does. Butler argues that the result of endlessly repeating gender identity is a coherent identity. An effect of coherence is quite different than claiming a static or fixed identity. Arguing that Jo’s “topsy turvy” personality does not alter significantly from the beginning to the end of Little Women, for example, does not mean that Jo has a definable, solidly coherent and fixed identity. Rather, it means that Jo has negotiated for acceptance of the troublesome aspect of her repeated identity--the boisterous masculinity which she will not relinquish. Ultimately, the character’s lack of fundamental change is liberatory: it shows the reader that troublesome behaviour can be accepted. Moreover, even if one chooses to read the novels’ endings as heralding the conformity and thus submission of the young heroines to the dictates of their societies, the rebellion, the troublesomeness, and the gender-bending remain encoded in the text. The gender trouble is always there to remind the reader of alternative positions.

Ethel learns her lessons well and adjusts herself to her family, yet she does not undergo character development. Near the beginning of The Daisy Chain, the children are instructed to read a letter written by their late mother in which she describes the

personalities of each child. The description of Ethel is inextricably linked to her brother Norman's, with exceptions. They share "the same brilliant cleverness, the same strong feeling, not easy of demonstration, though impetuous in action." Ethel is distinguished from Norman only in the negative: "But poor Ethel's old foibles, her harum-scarum nature, quick temper, uncouth manners, and heedlessness of all but one absorbing object, have kept her back, and caused her much discomfort" (44). While Ethel needs to "conquer" these faults, her mother continues: "My great hope is her entire indifference to praise--not approval, but praise. If she had not come up to her own standard, she works on, not always with good temper, but perseveringly, and entirely unheeding of commendation, till she has satisfied herself" (45). Tellingly, Ethel's "faults" are repeated in the praise of her character. Her heedlessness turns into being "unheeding of commendation;" her "quick temper" mutates into "not always with good temper" as she attempts to maintain her own high standards; her "uncouth manners" might even result from her "entire indifference to praise." Norman, according to his mother, leads a "life of emulation" (45), but Ethel does as well. Mrs. May's detailed character sketches of her children form the basis for the reader's understanding of each individual as well as for the children's understanding of their own characters. She has effectively written a script for her children, and the reader, to follow. Significantly, while Ethel learns about and negotiates for appropriate avenues for her troublesome aspirations, her character does not fundamentally change from this early analysis.

The possibilities for Ethel's development are shown when Margaret despairs over being thrust into the role of mother to Ethel and feels she is not equal to the task. She thinks of Ethel: "It is what people call a difficult dangerous age, and the grander she is, the danger of not managing her rightly. If those high purposes should run only into romance like mine, or grow out into eccentricities and unfeminineness, what a grievous pity it would be!" (54). As I have already shown, however, instead of conforming to a feminine ideal, Ethel locates a femininity to correspond to her grand aspirations. This negotiation and

learning process differs from a change in personality and character. Ethel does not relinquish her grand characteristics. Even toward the end of the novel, Ethel struggles with thoughts that “the home-world seemed rather stale and unprofitable” compared to London, and she fights “hard with her own petulance and sense of tedium at home” (402). “I never like to be quiet. I get so unhappy,” she confesses to Margaret in the first third of volume one (77). This continues to be true for her, if unvoiced, in the second volume where, for example, “her periods of ennui were when she had to set about any home employment” (403).

Ethel’s “outward appearance” does alter over the course of the novel:

The years had rounded her angles, softened her features, and tinged her cheeks with a touch of red, that took off from the surrounding sallowness. She held herself better, had learnt to keep her hair in order, and the more womanly dress, plain though it was, improved her figure more than could have been hoped in the days of her lank, gawky girlhood. (300)

However her appearance may have improved at the beginning of volume two, her activity remains the same as it was when she was introduced in volume one: she is again sitting in the window “with a book, a dictionary and pencil” and responds to Margaret with “a sigh” (300). Ethel begins volume one in the window-seat reading Henry V (4) and expressing thinly-veiled impatience with her governess. Ethel’s duties and the expectations of her have changed considerably since her mother’s death, Margaret’s invalidity, and Flora’s marriage. Her time-table, which delineates the host of familial responsibilities that infringe on her own desires, shows that Ethel’s time is no longer her own. She adds notes to the end which demonstrate her unhappiness with the expectations on her: “*Musts*--to be first consulted. *Mays*--last. Ethel May’s last of all. If I cannot do everything--omit the self-chosen” (364). However, after devoting herself to this measure of self-sacrifice to family duties, Ethel collapses into an armchair and reads a “railway novel” of Harry’s, a pastime which suggests that her lot is not quite as demanding as she would like to believe. The

“luxury of an idle reading” undermines the lack of free time Ethel creates for herself in her timetable: she still gets away with doing what she wants.

Like Ethel, Jo’s personality does not significantly change over the course of Little Women, even while she has learned to accommodate herself to her society. She has located a sense of identity that has not altered her or forced her to “grow down,” to use Annis Pratt’s words. When she and Meg are invited to Mrs. Gardiner’s New Year’s Eve party, Jo exposes herself as clumsy, graceless, and incapable of feminine arts. She burns Meg’s hair while trying to style it. Her only pair of gloves is spoilt with lemonade, so she and Meg have to share Meg’s good pair. At the party itself, she feels like “a colt in a flower-garden” (26). Meg is worried that Jo will not deport herself in a ladylike fashion: “don’t put your hands behind you, or stare, or say ‘Christopher Columbus,’” she warns (24), adding later that “winking isn’t ladylike” and stressing that Jo should “hold [her] shoulders straight, and take short steps, and don’t shake hands if you are introduced to anyone, it isn’t the thing” (26).

The concern over Jo’s outward appearance is echoed by Amy when the two sisters go calling together. Amy coaches Jo on proper behaviour which, as I have mentioned, Jo overacts, much to Amy’s chagrin. Jo first plays “calm, cool and quiet,” according to Amy’s instructions, but to such a degree that the Chesters believe her to be a “haughty, uninteresting creature” (289, 290). At the Lamb’s, Jo takes Amy’s advice to “gossip and giggle” again to the extreme with the result that the Chesters feel she is mocking their daughter May (290, 299). Jo’s attempts to play feminine show both that she can place herself in these roles and that she refuses to inscribe herself these ways. Amy leaves Jo to her own devices for the last visit and Jo’s own choice becomes readily apparent: “Jo sat on the grass with an encampment of boys about her, and a dirty-footed dog reposing on the skirt of her state and festival dress” (294). She continues to express herself as decidedly unfeminine.

At the end of the novel, Jo maintains this dramatic self-expression. Even after Beth's death, when Jo resolves to be more feminine and sacrificial, she cannot relinquish her headstrong ways. Beth requests that Jo "take my place . . . and be everything to mother and father when I am gone" (418), with the result that Jo "tried in a blind, hopeless way to do her duty, secretly rebelling against it all the while" (432). She still feels that she is "all wrong" (433), but she throws herself into Beth's role nonetheless, showing that identity is never self-identical: "Jo found herself humming the songs Beth used to hum, imitating Beth's orderly ways, and giving the little touches here and there that kept everything fresh and cozy" (434). She remains unhappy in this role, however.

Once she is reunited with Professor Bhaer, Jo finds that she can return to her usual behaviour. After he has inexplicably stayed away from the March household for three days, Jo stomps off to find Bhaer, showing herself to be firmly in control of her destiny. She arrives "where gentlemen most do congregate," rather than at the dry-goods store, for which she ostensibly sets off. She loiters around with the hope that she will come across Bhaer and feigns "unfeminine interest" in engineering equipment, "tumbling over barrels, being half-smothered by descending bales, and hustled unceremoniously by busy men" (469). In this passage, Jo's topsy-turvy personality is happily restored. She "impetuously" rushes across the street, almost gets hit by a truck, trips into the arms of an elderly gentleman, gets caught in a downpour, and certainly acts with everything but feminine decorum. After "bumping into" the Professor, Jo wants to impress him with her domestic shopping skills, but "she upset the tray of needles, forgot the silesia was to be twilled till it was cut off, gave the wrong change, and covered herself with confusion by asking for lavender ribbon at the calico counter" (471). Jo manages to retain the lack of decorum and grace which caused such trouble at the beginning of Little Women. Indeed, the Professor, like the reader, seems to love her for these very qualities, while Laurie, as Jo points out, would "be ashamed of" Jo: "I'm homely, and awkward, and odd, and old," she claims, "and I shouldn't like elegant society and you would, and

you'd hate my scribbling" (364, 365). Rather than completely changing to suit her environment, then, Jo negotiates for acceptance of her very distinctive and troublesome character: she may remain unable to marry her sister Meg, but she selects a mate who accepts her 'masculine' qualities.

In Anne of Green Gables, Anne herself insists that she has not changed. As Marilla regrets the changes she perceives in her adopted child, Anne reassures her: "I'm not a bit changed--not really. I'm only just pruned down and branched out. The real *me*--back here--is just the same. It won't make a difference where I go or how much I change outwardly" (276). The recurring image of the brook that runs close to Green Gables and through Avonlea mirrors the "pruned down and branched out" development of Anne. By the end of the novel, Anne, like the brook in the first line, has conformed to Avonlea standards of propriety represented by Mrs. Lynde. This brook

was reputed to be an intricate, headlong brook in its earlier course through those woods, with dark secrets of pool and cascade; but by the time it reached Lynde's Hollow it was a well-conducted little stream, for not even a brook could run past Mrs. Rachel Lynde's door without due regard for decency and decorum. (Montgomery 1)

Elizabeth Epperly has pointed out the importance of this brook as a symbol for what will happen to Anne: she will grow from a headlong and untamed child into a civilized and acceptable young lady (Epperly 19). But the brook, which appears again and again in the novel, takes on an even greater significance than Epperly allows: while Anne, like the brook, learns to be quiet and well-conducted, she also learns where to negotiate. Anne hints at another interpretation of the brook on her first morning in Green Gables: "I can hear the brook laughing all the way up here. Have you ever noticed what cheerful things brooks are? They're always laughing. Even in wintertime I've heard them under the ice" (31-32). The brook, like Anne when the reader first meets her, is always laughing, even when its environment--either wintertime or Avonlea propriety--causes it to grow a

superficial layer to mask this laughter. That the brook's and Anne's expression is laughter rather than murmuring or babbling, words also associated with brooks, indicates the response Montgomery looks for in the reader: we as readers are not to take Anne's conformity too seriously. While Anne's hiding her emotions under the surface can be seen as repression, so too can the emotional make-up of both Anne and the brook: both are always laughing, no other response seems possible. Arguably, if Anne can only laugh and act cheerfully, she begins the novel with her emotions more repressed than they are when the novel ends.

Anne certainly does seem to grow a layer of ice, like the brook, to hide her emotions. As the novel progresses, she begins to talk less and takes on a more demure demeanour as Epperly and others have pointed out (Epperly 37; see also MacLulich 466). Anne's apparent conformity fully manifests itself in the chapter significantly entitled "Where the Brook and River Meet," which outlines Anne's physical and mental growth alongside Marilla's sense of loss and regret at losing her adopted child. When Marilla confronts Anne about her newfound quietness, Anne replies, "It's nicer to think dear pretty thoughts and keep them in one's heart, like treasures. I don't like to have them laughed at or wondered over" (254-55). The narrator suggests that "perhaps she thought all the more and dreamed as much as ever, but she certainly talked less" (254). Anne recognizes that she must keep secret her deep pools and cascades, but she still has them nonetheless. She has learned to conform on the surface. But laughter is always still possible underneath.

Anne's negotiation lies in her apparent conformity which conceals but does not erase her "improper" thoughts and desires. At the beginning of the novel she displays a general happiness that seems incongruent with her circumstances. For example, after realizing that her newfound home does not welcome her, Anne gushes with happiness and bliss, regardless of the fact that she will be sent back to the orphanage. She talks incessantly to Marilla, mentioning her "sorrows," but focusing on cheerful topics (32).

Likewise, when telling Marilla about her past, Anne keeps as much as possible to the facts. Marilla asks whether the women were good to Anne, and Anne has difficulty answering; however, “Marilla was shrewd enough to read between the lines of Anne’s history and divine the truth” about Anne’s neglected and impoverished life (41). Because Anne focuses on the happy elements of her life, using romance for colour, she cannot plainly divulge the truth.

While she seems to have conformed and become increasingly repressed, Anne has, rather, maintained an indirect expression for her emotional responses to the world around her. As I previously discussed, she actively finds indirect outlets for emotions other than laughter: her gothic-style of writing makes her cry “like a child” while writing it (208); she pretends to be Tennyson’s lily maid, a heartbroken woman who dies because she wants what she cannot have; and she publicly recites “The Maiden’s Vow,” which she labels “pathetic,” saying “I’d rather make people cry than laugh” (269). She learns where it is acceptable to vent a full range of emotions. While the indirectness of expression is lamentable itself, it is the predominant quality of Anne’s inherited world. She maintains the impassioned emotions that distinguish her from others, yet learns to channel them into acceptable spheres. Ultimately, then, she learns, but she does not change. She remains a particularly sensitive, expressive, and emotional girl who has negotiated for acceptance of these traits.

Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery problematize gender by revealing traditional beliefs about women’s roles and by offering examples of femininity which are themselves not ideal. The heroines cause trouble by having difficulty conforming to traditional gender identities, and this troublesomeness is precisely the moment of agency and potential liberation for the young girls. Gender is not a natural or essential trait, the texts say, but needs to be constantly articulated and rigidly enforced. Because gender is always in the process of being articulated and defined, it is also always open to negotiation. The reader learns that negotiating is possible. The heroine’s perceived

difference or character flaw--Ethel's and Jo's masculinity, Anne's unfeminine passion-- by being continually repeated, even in the face of disapprobation, establishes an effect of a coherent identity. That the heroine learns to accommodate herself to her community yet does not change over the course of the novel shows that, through negotiation, acceptance of difference or troublesomeness is indeed possible. Ethel, Jo, and Anne teach readers that agency exists in each and every moment of articulation.

Notes

¹ For some discussions about these issues see Cott, Delamont, and Light and Prentice.

² Obviously, there are differences between the gender ideologies in the British, American and Canadian nineteenth century. However, the conflict between a rigid prescription for proper behaviour and the acknowledgement of women's capacities outside these limited roles manifests itself in all three countries. A more detailed comparison of the three nations is outside the scope of my present project. Scotland institutionalized education for girls and women in 1696, for example. Due to British colonization, this Scottish influence touched Alcott's New England and, to a greater degree, Montgomery's Prince Edward Island, whereas Yonge's England did not have institutionalized public education until 1870, after The Daisy Chain was written. Each heroine thus confronts different attitudes towards education for females. I am indebted to Mary Rubio for calling my attention to the impact of Scottish ideals on Alcott's and particularly Montgomery's environment.

³ The Victorian ideal of the angel in the house, so-called because of Coventry Patmore's poem of the same name (1855-56), purports that women should be submissive, nurturing, and peaceful domestic angels. See Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Nina Auerbach, and Elaine Showalter (A Literature of their Own) for discussions of this Victorian ideal.

⁴ Butler would disagree with Fetterley's assumption that there is a "doer before the deed," putting on a mask of femininity. Agency, for Butler, consists of altering the cultural inscriptions in the endless repetitions. She would take issue with the assumption that there is a pre-existing "being" behind the identity. She might instead point out, as I will, that Jean Muir's contradictory identities of young, innocent governess and hardened, older actress problematize the coherence of both.

⁵ Hekman's theories are an important balance to Butler's. Because Butler believes that there is no pre-existing self, that we are simply repeated imitations of gender ideals deemed to a failure that is, ultimately, liberatory, it becomes extremely difficult to theorize and

discuss agency within her framework. While a discussion of the heroine's "choices" may seem to posit a pre-existing "being" that is doing the choosing, Hekman resolves this dilemma: the discursive subject, Hekman argues, constructs itself from available discursive formations. This construction does not require "the essential 'I', the constituting subject within all of us. Rather, it entails using the tools provided us by the discursive mix that constitutes our very existence. Judith Butler puts this point nicely when she states that 'Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible'" (Hekman 203; see also Butler 147).

⁶ King Ethelred-- note the lack of a "d"--the first ruled England from 866 to 871 AD, while King Ethelred II, The Unready, from whom Ethel May gets her nickname, "Etheldred the Unready," ruled England from 978 to 1016 AD.

⁷ While I am interested here in the cultural scripts available to the girls and thus choose to read the incestuous relationship in this benign way, I recognize that the incest can be read as incest. In which case, it would not be empowering for the heroine. Certainly, this alternative reading haunts my own and does not conflict with my emphasis on the myriad contradictions that riddle these stories.

⁸ Of course, the homoerotic elements in both Little Women and Anne of Green Gables, which will be discussed later, like the incest in The Daisy Chain, can be read for what they are--a sexual interest in same-sex partners. However, because my interest is in the cultural scripts available, I am choosing to focus on this one reading of the text. Once again, however, while my reading tends towards empowerment for the heroine as she constructs herself from the discursive mix, a reading that stresses unsatisfied homosexual desire would suggest a less empowering position for the heroine.

Conclusion:

Happily Ever After:

Negotiating the Ending

When they got married the book stopped right off, so I reckon their troubles were over. It's real nice that that's the way in books anyhow, isn't it, even if 'tisn't so anywhere else.

--L.M. Montgomery

Captain Jim makes the above statement about a book he has finished reading. His comment not only gives Anne's House of Dreams a metafictional and ironic quality --his life and the "anywhere else" he is referring to are fictional as well--but it also makes a statement about the extent to which Montgomery and writers like her are doing what Rachel Blau DuPlessis has called "writing beyond the ending." DuPlessis believes that nineteenth-century writers worked hard to keep Bildung--the character's development--and romance separate: novels ended with either the marriage or death of the heroine, necessarily repressing Bildung. Twentieth-century women writers have been left with the project of attempting to unite the two seemingly contradictory strands of narrative, DuPlessis claims:

In nineteenth-century narrative, where women heroes were concerned, quest and love plots were intertwined, simultaneous discourse, but at the resolution of the work, the energies of Bildung were incompatible with the closure in successful courtship or marriage. Quest for women was thus finite; we learn that any plot of self-realization was at the service of the marriage plot and was subordinate to, or covered within, the magnetic power of that ending.

(DuPlessis 6)

This statement certainly overlooks Ethel from The Daisy Chain, who chooses not to marry. The supposed conflict between quest and love emphasizes a central problem

with the Bildungsroman. If it is a novel about the formation of identity, a novel of process, as I have argued in the introduction, how does one achieve closure? A marriage conveys ending, finality, whereas quest presumably never stops. I pointed out in the introduction that neither Pip, Stephen Dedalus, nor Huck Finn end their novels with finality. The Bildungsroman, as a novel of process, resists the sense of ending: the reader is often left with the sense that the protagonist's life is about to begin.

The female Bildungsroman is no different. Thus far, I have argued that girls' stories highlight the heroine's agency. In chapter one, I explored the authors' agency in negotiating the cultural scripts they inherited: by calling attention to traditional genres and plots and by emphasizing how they re-write these stories, the authors underscore their own agency in creating new cultural scripts for their heroines. In chapter two, I examined the contradictions inherent in the heroine's family life. By both glorifying family life and exposing it as potentially oppressive, these three novels emphasize, again, the heroine's agency in negotiating a solution to her only option--family living. Finally, in chapter three, I traced the heroine's clever negotiations of contradictory gender identity. The heroine constructs her own sense of a coherent identity that is at odds with traditional femininity, yet receives acceptance from her community. Ultimately, in all three chapters, but particularly two and three, I hope I have shown that the heroine is an active subject, one who acts and creates. The lesson to the reader is to acknowledge limitations and restraints, but also to negotiate for change. Agency is always possible.

Each heroine's story does not end here. While DuPlessis believes that nineteenth-century writers could not manage to write beyond the ending, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery quite literally do just that. Instead of leaving the narrative once their heroine's romantic options are settled, whether by marriage or not, these three writers (and others like them) continue their stories in sequel.¹ The story does not

end for the heroine once she is married or older or a mother. A focus on quest, the heroine's development, or romantic love sets up an opposition that I suggested in chapter one is not an opposition at all. The authors successfully manipulate their plots to intertwine the apparent conflicts. Rather, a continuing examination of the heroine's agency in the sequels suggests that, even while the heroine's role in the novels becomes secondary, her agency remains at the fore. Each author continues to teach the reader about the powerful skill of negotiation.

The contradictions: patriarchy, gender, marriage

The narrative contradictions that defined Yonge's, Alcott's, and Montgomery's original novels re-appear, often to a heightened degree, in the sequels: the happy moral tales do not repress the potential for oppression and abuse. While these stories seem to be lighthearted uncritical pictures of contained womanhood, the conflicting narratives of tyranny and abuse, but also empowerment, undermine this interpretation. Each facet of the narrative is a comment on the other. Patriarchy in Yonge's novel may not be entirely oppressive; but neither is it wholly benevolent or effective. In the sequels to Little Women, children's masochistic submission to authority is expected, and gender differences seem more clearly defined, yet the texts contradict themselves by advocating for a fluidity of gender roles and by voicing the need for self-reliance. Montgomery's sequels expose the abuse and devastation experienced in marriage, even while they celebrate marital life. As I will discuss later, the heroines' agency is foregrounded because they are placed in these narrative conflicts: abuse is alarmingly possible, the texts say, but these women manage to negotiate for happiness. First, I will examine the contradictions which characterize the sequels.

The Trial, Yonge's sequel to The Daisy Chain, contradicts itself over the issue of patriarchal authority, both upholding and undermining it. In so doing, Yonge continues to underscore Ethel's potentially helpless position within the family, a

position established in The Daisy Chain, as I discussed in chapter two. In The Trial, Ethel herself is one of the strongest advocates of patriarchal authority; she preaches submission to it, as if to God. Her support is most apparent when she speaks to members of the Ward family who are having difficulty adjusting to their brother's headstrong rule over the household. She says to Leonard: "as master of the house, your brother has a right to your compliance" (Yonge 60). She entreats him to convince his sister, Averil, to comply as well: "if you teach Ave to be loyal to the head of your family, you will do her as much good as you will do harm by chafing against his ordinances" (Yonge 60). Averil and Leonard take Ethel's advice, but "outward submission was compensated by murmur and mockery in private" (Yonge 68). The text seems to support Ethel's position by showing that if one rebels against patriarchal authority, even in private, disaster results. Because Leonard refuses to submit to his brother's often unreasonable demands, he goes to work for his uncle in a mill where he is framed for and convicted of murder.

However, The Trial, like The Daisy Chain, also reveals tyrannical and ineffectual aspects of patriarchy. Claudia Nelson sees this exposure of the injustice of patriarchal power as elucidating the view that submissiveness and other "feminine" qualities are the only route to spiritual salvation (Nelson 20). Indeed, The Trial seems to advocate submissiveness to a patriarchal authority that is abusive. Henry Ward's ascension to family patriarch exposes how easily power can be misused. Henry has a history of making headstrong and erroneous decisions with tragic results before he becomes master of the house. He becomes the head of the household because his medical judgment proves faulty and an epidemic of scarlet fever breaks out. His father and mother die from the illness, leaving the family orphaned and Henry in charge. Henry makes unreasonable demands on his grieving siblings: he wants to banish Leonard's dog from the house, he is outraged at any perceived insubordination from Leonard or Averil, and he insists Averil spend time with an ill-bred woman for his own

benefit. His abuse of power results, indirectly, in Leonard's conviction of murder because Leonard left home to escape his brother's tyranny. Instead of repenting, however, Henry continues to make poor decisions. He packs up his sisters and moves to America where he can escape the stigma of the trial. Significantly, he changes the family name, a symbol of patriarchal rule, ostensibly to protect the family from negative repercussions of the trial, but it also demonstrates his keen desire to have complete patriarchal control, to re-invent his family. He invests in questionable property and ignores his sisters as they grow ill in the unhealthy climate. One sister dies and the other becomes an invalid as a result of his tyranny.

As I mentioned, Nelson suggests that Yonge's novel conveys the message that all one can do in the face of tyrannical patriarchy is submit. This submission is true heroism and will bring one closer to God. Leonard does not submit to his brother's will and thus, through a related sequence of events, becomes a prisoner where he is forced to learn submission. Leonard's ultimate submission is to God, however, and not to his tyrannical brother, suggesting that true, heroic submission should not be to an oppressive patriarchal authority. On the other hand, Averil submits to Henry by moving to America and living by her brother's dictates:

There was true heroism in the spirit in which this young girl braced herself to uncomplaining acceptance of desertion [by Henry] in this unwholesome swamp, with her two ailing sisters, beside the sluggish stream, amid the skeleton trees--heroism the greater because there was no enthusiastic patriotism to uphold her--it was only the land of her captivity, whence she looked towards home like Judah to Jerusalem. (Yonge 268)

While it seems to be the only choice, submission to patriarchal authority is not what The Trial avocates, however. Averil is not rewarded but made ill by the repression of her desires to be home with Leonard. Her younger sister Minna manifests the dangers of repression to a greater degree: it brings about her death. Henry has insisted that

Averil never discuss Leonard with the younger children. He wishes to erase the past. His decision to exile Leonard from their young minds proves to exacerbate physical weakness in Minna. Her dying wish is to hear about Leonard:

And only then did Averil know the full misery that Henry's decision had inflicted on the gentle little heart, in childish ignorance, imagining fetters and dungeons, even in her sober waking moods, and a prey to untold horrors in every dream, exaggerated by fevers and ailment--horrors that, for aught she knew, might be veritable, and made more awful by the treatment of his name as that of one dead. (Yonge 275)

While The Trial seems to uphold patriarchal power, this novel also calls it into question. Feminine submission, the text suggests, may not be the most desirable response to patriarchal tyranny.

Another response to oppressive patriarchy is revealed in Averil's relationship with misogynistic Tom May. While not the eldest son, Tom is heir to the May family's patriarchal throne as he is the only son pursuing the father's profession. He sees himself as "the sensible man of the family," which results in condescending behaviour towards the family and the greater community (Yonge 208). Tom is contemptuous of all the Wards, particularly Averil who has been trained only to charm. His misogyny, already established in The Daisy Chain, permeates The Trial as well. For example, Aubrey tells Dr. May how Tom chastised him: "Tom says it all comes of living with women that I can't keep my mouth shut" (Yonge 150). Because of Tom's misogyny and supercilious demeanour, Averil will not take his proposal of marriage seriously. Rather, she is quite offended. She replies with dignity: "I understand how much a country surgeon's daughter is beneath an M.D.'s attention and how needful it was to preserve the distance by marks of contempt. As a convict's sister, the distance is so much widened, that it is well for both that we shall never meet again" (Yonge 207). Tom must reform in order to win Averil, and reform he does. He tracks down the real

murderer by an act of Providence, redeems Leonard, and travels to America to tell Averil the news. The message is clear: Averil did not submit to his will, nor did she need to. Because of Averil's strength of character and anger at his egocentric proposal, Tom learns what a pompous, selfish man he is. His reformation and winning of Averil does not require a sacrifice of the young woman. Rendered ill by colonial life, she is destined to be an invalid, itself a typical nineteenth-century feminine role requiring some submission. She must, in Dr. May's words, "submit to a sofa life and much nursing" (Yonge 364). So, while Averil like Leonard must learn submission, it need not be to an abusive patriarchal authority. Instead, she must resign herself to a circumscribed lifestyle, a position of potential power as I argued in chapter three in reference to Margaret May. The invalid often becomes the centre of the household, as Averil does:

[Averil], upon her sofa, is that home member of a mission without whom nothing can be done--the copier of letters, the depot of gifts, the collector of books, the keeper of accounts But Mrs. Thomas May is a good deal more than this. Her sofa is almost a renewal of the family centre that once Margaret's was. (365)

Arguably, Henry's tyrannical power is the cause of Averil's illness; however, Tom May's reformation and sound medical judgment--a more even-handed patriarchal authority because Averil alters it by her dignified anger--saves her life. Patriarchy may be unavoidable, but it can be manipulated; submission may be necessary, but agency is still possible.

In Little Men and Jo's Boys, Alcott's sequels to Little Women, contradictions about submission and gender roles expose the apparent rigidity of Jo's world, a rigidity much more acute than that in Little Women. In these two novels, the focus is on self-denial and punishment, yet the children's situation is one of being cared for and nurtured by the adults around them. Professor and Mrs. Bhaer force the children into

complicity with their own punishment, an interesting contradiction in itself. On the one hand, it encourages them to love their punishers, to feel themselves deserving of chastisement. On the other, however, it makes them actors in their own socialization, rather than passive recipients of an oppressive system. The most devastating moment, which becomes paradigmatic for the morality of much of these two novels, occurs when Professor Bhaer punishes Nat for telling a lie. As the professor promised, Nat must hit the older man, rather than the other way around: “this reversing the order of things almost took their [the boys’] breath away” (LM 59). Professor Bhaer is practicing what he preaches, in a sense: he is accepting pain, in a sacrificial way, for the child’s edification. Indeed, the text makes clear Professor Bhaer’s association with Christ’s sacrifice: Nat thinks of the professor, “whose kind hand he never touched without remembering that it had willingly borne pain for his sake” (LM 61).

Even though the children are punished for transgressions, Plumfield is a caring and nurturing school. Jo says, “We don’t believe in making children miserable by too many rules, and too much study” (LM 16). The Bhaers believe in raising children much as they would cultivate a garden, as Professor Bhaer’s allegorical tale to the children reveals. The implicit message of the tale is that the children must also work at cultivating positive characteristics in themselves. Again, however, he encourages complicity in the children, as he says: “Each of you think what you need most, and tell me, and I will help you to grow it” (LM 43). The list of traits run the gamut of perseverance, steadiness, wisdom, getting up early, and enjoying lessons. Professor Bhaer sums up the morality of the last two novels by his response to the traits listed by the boys and girls: “We will plant self-denial and hoe it and water it” (LM 44). Cultivating virtues in the boys at Plumfield is a higher priority for Professor Bhaer than scholastic studies: “Self-knowledge, self-help, and self-control were more important, and he tried to teach them carefully” (LM 27). The emphasis on the individual, suggests that one must foster one’s own strengths and forge one’s own path. This

position seems less harsh than the one that demands self-denial. Yet, the novels clearly recommend complicity with and conformity to the greater community and the status quo, a message that is dominant in Little Women.

Punishment and breaking the children of their perceived faults are a dominant focus of both sequels, and a masochistic submission is regarded as the desired response. After Nan gets lost, Jo confesses that her mother had whipped her for running away when she was a child. This confession not only sheds new light on the angelic Marmee from Little Women, but the way in which Marmee tried to rectify the whipping with a more apt punishment is also highly questionable: “She tied me to the bed-post with a long string, so that I could not go out of the room, and there I stayed all day with the little worn-out shoes hanging up before me to remind me of my fault” (LM 202). While whipping is seen as wrong--Marmee apologized--tying a child up is seen as somehow more appropriate and less abusive. And Nan agrees: “‘I should think that would cure anybody,’ cried Nan, who loved her liberty above all things” (LM 202). Again, Nan is forced into complicity with her punishment, just as Nat was. Not only does she agree that it is apt, but she does not rebel by untying the rope. Rob, who was lost with Nan, is “so charmed by the new punishment, that he got a jumprope and tethered himself to the other arm of the sofa in the most social manner” (LM 203). They both feel “a certain sense of virtue in helping to punish themselves” (LM 204). Nan needs to learn that true liberty is something that must be negotiated: she cannot just take it heedlessly, but must consider the impact her behaviour will have on those around her. She learns her lesson: “Nothing atoned for the loss of freedom; and a few hours of confinement taught Nan how precious it was” (LM 205). The paradox is that Nan must use her freedom in accordance with social approbation--she can only move within socially acceptable limits--or lose it altogether. Similar to Jo in Little Women, Nan learns that one must conform to some degree in order to retain one’s liberty.

This maxim does not hold true for the most problematic, and most intriguing, of Jo's boys. In Dan, the rebellious black sheep, an inability to conform is punished by ostracism and death, shedding light on Alcott's overarching message in all three works: accommodating one's community is necessary for survival. Linda Black argues that Dan shares many characteristics with Twain's Huck Finn: "Dan and Huck are both rough, ill-mannered youngsters who love independence, and hate rules" (Black 16). Dan, like Huck, is a figure who cannot conform, who cannot negotiate his liberty, and thus who cannot fit into society, but must instead remain on the margins. The similarities between Dan and Jo are instructive: they suggest that Jo feels a similar propensity for violence and sense of imprisonment, contradicting the picture of her as contented, submissive matron. Instead of masochistic submission, Dan embodies a sadism at odds with social approbation. Jo feels a particularly strong connection with him in Little Men and Jo's Boys: he is her pet project, of which Professor Bhaer is slightly disapproving. She continually pleads on his behalf, sympathizing with his struggles to control his passionate emotions. As she says, "I've been trying to govern my own temper all my life, and haven't learnt yet" (JB 110). She makes this statement in response to Dan's claim, "I shall kill someone some day; that's all I'm afraid of" (JB 109). She can be sympathetic with Dan because she made a similar statement in her youth to her mother: "It seems as if I could do anything when I'm in a passion; I get so savage, I could hurt anyone, and enjoy it. I'm afraid I shall do something dreadful some day, and spoil my life, and make everybody hate me" (LW 79). Dan becomes a projection of Jo. The difference is, however, that Jo manages to negotiate between her passionate nature and social dictates, and Dan cannot. Jo successfully lives a well-rounded, fulfilling life: she has family, community, and a career. Dan dies fighting, the narrator explains, and lies buried in a forest, forever on the margins. Nan had to conform in order to retain a limited liberty. Dan cannot conform, and dies.

The language used in reference to the rebellious boy focuses on taming, requiring a masochistic submission to a master. Laurie is fascinated by Dan because he runs away, as Laurie often longed to do, and Dan is “slowly getting tamed by pain and patience” (LM 170). Professor Bhaer, in particular, repeatedly refers to the need to domesticate Dan. He says to Jo: “When you have tamed him a little he will do you credit” (LM 189). Jo, contrary to her approach to Nan, does not seem to agree with the notion of disciplining the boy: “she felt instinctively that the more the boy was restrained the more he would fret against it; but leave him free, and the mere sense of liberty would content him” (LM 264). Highlighting his sadism, Dan masters a colt without anyone’s knowledge. When the truth is revealed, Mrs. Bhaer is quick to make a moral point to Dan: “Isn’t he a much more useful and agreeable animal than the wild colt who spent his days racing about the field, jumping fences, and running away now and then?” (LM 272). She thereby suggests that she, like Dan, is taming a colt, namely him. In creating this parallel, Jo is trying to make Dan complicit in his socialization, to encourage him to accept a masochistic rather than a sadistic role. He tamed the colt, as he should be tamed.

Dan cannot adopt a masochistic role, however. What makes him rebellious and marginal is his “pent-up power,” which poses a potential threat to the community. Dan’s vitality cannot fit in with daily life at Plumfield. He soars above social constraints. He works his energy off, in one instance, by chopping wood. The narrator points out that this power would “otherwise have been expended in some less harmless way” (LM 268). The definite future tense “would” shows the frightening potential for violence in Dan. As does his “wild” energy when he returns from one of his visits and gallops about on his horse with his dog at his side: “It was a fine sight-- the three wild things at play, so full of vigour, grace, and freedom, that for the moment the smooth lawn seemed a prairie; and the spectators felt as if this glimpse of another life made their own seem rather tame and colourless” (JB 74). His sexuality, too, is

described as potentially violent and threatening to the social order. During his visit, “Dan stood rather in awe of the ‘fair girl-graduates,’ and was silent when among them, eyeing them as an eagle might a flock of doves” (JB 77). The predatory nature is frightening and must be kept at bay. Whereas Nan, like Jo before her, learns to negotiate the social constraints around her, Dan does not. He kills a man, spends time in jail, repents, and turns to a life of altruism. Even though he repents, Dan must continue to live on the margins of society. He is desperately in love with Laurie’s daughter Bess, but can never marry her. Jo realizes that, because he had been in jail, “few women would care to marry Dan now, except such as would hinder, not help, him in the struggle which life would always be to him; and it would be better to go solitary to his grave” (JB 312). Dan’s freedom has come at a tremendous cost—he will be lonely for the rest of his life, an option Jo rejected in Little Women as she contemplated the loneliness of spinsterhood.

The comparison between Dan and Nan raises an interesting point about the gender socialization of the boys and girls. Alcott presents Dan and his hunger for ultimate freedom and mastery as an undesirable option for young people, or boys in particular. A fundamental contradiction arises over the presentation of gender. The two novels seem to demarcate boys and girls more rigidly than does Little Women, in which Laurie wants desperately to play with the March sisters. Boys play in certain ways at certain games, while girls play domestic roles. After the boys will not let Daisy share their game, for example, Jo develops a little kitchen for her to play with. When the boys show interest in getting involved, Jo responds by saying, “girls can’t play with boys” (LM 66). This statement has a double effect. It asserts the distinct difference between the sexes. Yet it is also ironic—Jo does not mean it—and makes the boys regret their earlier treatment of Daisy.

Although gender seems distinctive and firmly entrenched, the texts contradict themselves by rewarding a fluidity of roles. Sarah Elbert writes, “the best of Jo’s

boys, in fact, learn to expand their nurturing capacities, and in becoming more like women they become more fully human as well” (Elbert 227). The male characters who are rewarded, such as Nat, are not like Dan in their uncontainable vitality. Nat is a submissive, eager-to-please boy who works hard to prove himself worthy of Meg’s daughter, Daisy. Professor Bhaer enjoys the boy, “finding his new pupil as docile and affectionate as a girl,” and refers to him as his “daughter” (LM 55). Nat succeeds in the end: he wins the girl and achieves musical success. Gender-bending, adopting qualities attributed to the opposite sex, seems to be the path to success.

Gender-bending appears in the discourse surrounding the girls at Plumfield as well. The novels seem to adhere to traditional notions of femininity by asserting that women can only exercise the power of influence, a power that is passive and, arguably, not especially empowering. Jo tells Laurie at the end of Little Men that she likes to watch “the progress of my little men and, lately, to see how well the influence of my little women works upon them” (LM 354-56). The boys actively progress, and the girls’ role is simply to influence the boys for good. The girls’ development and education do not seem to be a concern. This sentiment is echoed in Jo’s Boys, surprisingly by Nan, the most headstrong and career-oriented of the girls. She says: “My idea is that if we girls have any influence we should use it for the good of these boys, and not pamper them up, making slaves of ourselves and tyrants of them” (JB 92). For Nan, however, this power of influence represents equal rights for women. She suggests that women must be able to prove themselves in the world, just as men do. She says: “Let them prove what they can do and be before they ask anything of us, and give us a chance to do the same” (JB 92). She inverts the passivity of being an influence and suggests that the girls themselves should set examples to the boys by acting and not simply by inspiring the boys to action.

Moreover, the suggestion that women’s power is one of influence and not of action is undercut by a focus on self-reliance for women, and this is where the gender-

bending becomes clear. Particularly in Jo's Boys, the debate over women's rights rages between the boys and girls. Mr. March labels the debate a "civil war" (JB 30). Josie asks her grandfather, "Must women always obey men and say they are the wisest, just because they are the strongest?," to which the patriarch replies, "That is the old-fashioned belief, and it will take some time to change it. But I think the woman's hour has struck; and it looks to me as if the boys must do their best, for the girls are abreast now, and may reach the goal first" (JB 29-30). In Jo's Boys, women's hour has struck in many ways. The girls' education seems just as important as the boys'. The narrator classifies the girls who attend the college: one group cares about the social influence they receive, another about the mental culture and the third are "hungry for whatever could fit them to face the world and earn a living, being driven by necessity, the urgency of some half-conscious talent, or the restlessness of strong young natures to break away from the narrow life which no longer satisfied" (JB 248).

Jo makes clear to the girls that self-reliance, a typically masculine quality and one discouraged in the highly-independent Dan, is their most important goal. The subject of careers for women arises in the weekly sewing circle. Many of the girls respond with exciting options, "but nearly all ended with: 'Till I marry'" (JB 251). Jo is quick to point out that they may not marry. She suggests that they must fit themselves "to be useful, not superfluous women" (JB 251). The girls reconsider the stereotype of the old maid, which first demonstrates that beliefs have changed and, second, by virtue of the text's inclusion of the new view of spinsters, changes beliefs for readers: "Old maids aren't sneered at half as much as they used to be," one girl says, "since some of them have grown famous and proved that woman isn't a half but a whole human being, and can stand alone" (JB 251). Jo's combination of marriage, motherhood and a career notwithstanding, she does not think Nan could balance a career in medicine with a husband. When Tom, who has been unsuccessfully courting Nan, tells Jo that he is engaged, Jo exclaims, "If Nan has yielded, I will never forgive

her" (JB 150). While Nan must submit to Jo's authority, as I discussed earlier, she must not submit to marriage and dependance. Alcott's sequels both demand submission of the characters yet require their independence, and exact clear gender roles while encouraging gender-bending.

Like Alcott's sequels, Montgomery's novels contradict themselves through the litany of oppressive marriages that is countered by Anne's match-making and own happy marriage. In presenting this discourse of abuse and oppression, a discourse similar to the one detailing Anne's vulnerability in Anne of Green Gables, the sequels highlight Anne's agency by pointing out a much darker alternative: her situation could be devastating, but she works to make it harmonious, as I will discuss later. The story of Peter Kirk's funeral reveals the insistent discourse on abusive marriages. Walter Blythe overhears the ladies discussing the funeral during a quilting bee. He asks Anne about it, but she will not tell him the story. Peter Kirk was a tyrannical man who enjoyed humiliating and torturing his first wife. He remarried after she died, but her sister swore vengeance upon him. His second wife was stoic and uncomplaining; however, at his funeral, when the first wife's sister stands up and rails against the man's tyranny, the second wife thanks her. Anne realizes that the sister's hatred "was a pale thing compared to Olivia Kirk's" (AIn 220). Walter can never know this story, Anne thinks, because "it was certainly no story for children" (AIn 222). Ironically, it *is* in a story for children. In this moment, when Anne points out that some stories of real life are not appropriate for children because they are too harsh and filled with despair, Montgomery exposes her project: she is telling the whole story, appropriate or not. Her tale is not fantastical and unrealistic, painting a pretty picture of rural Prince Edward Island life. Rather, she also gives voice to the potential for abuse within marriage.

While not detailing abuse, the conflict between the romanticized and poetic, and the prosaic, everyday aspects of domestic unions which manifests itself in Anne's

107

succession of disappointing marriage proposals highlights the fact that real life may not be as fulfilling as one would hope. Anne's first would-be husband is Billy Andrews, who does not ask her himself but enlists his sister to propose for him. This proposal does not cohere with Anne's dreams of what it should be: "It had in those dreams, always been romantic and beautiful and the 'some one' was to be very handsome and dark-eyed and distinguished-looking and eloquent, whether he were Prince Charming to be enraptured with 'yes' or one to whom a regretful, beautifully worded, but hopeless refusal must be given" (AI 62). The second proposal, "another heart-rending disillusion," comes from Charlie Sloane, who "did not take his dismissal as Anne's imaginary suitors did" (AI 64). Gilbert proposes next, and Anne has difficulty giving her refusal: "There was nothing romantic about this. Must proposals be either grotesque or -- horrible?" (AI 143). Her next "unromantic" proposal comes from a hired boy. He would like to get a place of his own and "want[s] a woman" (AI 200). Anne is his choice. This time she can laugh over the lack of romance. Her proposal from Roy Gardner meets her ideals because Roy is her dark-eyed, eloquent hero. Even though he fulfills Anne's dreams of what romance should be, she cannot bring herself to accept his offer. Finally, by the end of the novel, she accepts Gilbert. The trappings of romance are no longer important. Rather than offering a fantastical fairy tale, then, Anne of the Island emphasizes the fact that real life and emotions often have nothing to do with poetic romance.

Like the unromantic proposals, the sequels' depictions of marriage is not wholeheartedly favourable. While Anne spends time match-making, bringing together Stephen Irving and Lavendar Lewis in Anne of Avonlea for example, the texts focus a great deal of attention on destructive marriages. The assumption seems to be that husbands are tricky characters to negotiate. One of Anne's students wants to be a widow when she grows up: "If you weren't married people called you an old maid, and if you were your husband bossed you; but if you were a widow there'd be no danger of

either” is her rationale (AA 86). A similar sentiment is expressed when the four girls at Redmond set up house-keeping together: “You had the fun of housekeeping without the bother of a husband” (AI 119). More overt statements about unhappy marriages begin to appear in Anne of Windy Poplars. Franklin Westcott is said to have dominated his deceased wife: “It is a common report that she was a slave,” Anne writes to Gilbert, “unable to call her soul her own” (AWP 214).

The discourse on troubled marriages heats up after Anne and Gilbert marry and move into their little house. The contradiction between the happily-united Blythes and the score of unhappy couples around them emphasizes the potential vulnerability of Anne’s position as a dependent wife. Leslie Moore, whose very name is a contradiction in terms, is such a wife. Married to a man she does not love, in order to save her mother from financial ruin, she embodies the figure of the suffering woman. She becomes almost mythological as “a tragic appealing figure of thwarted womanhood” (AHD 78). While her husband was tyrannical and domineering at the outset of their marriage, he bored quickly and left for the south. He disappears and is presumed dead. Unfortunately, he is discovered, ill and amnesiac, by Captain Jim and brought home. Leslie’s life now consists of caring for this invalid husband whom she was coerced into marrying. Her life is turned around by Gilbert, however. He finds a specialist to cure her supposed husband who turns out to be only the husband’s cousin. Leslie’s husband died years before. She is now free to marry Owen Ford. The text’s reversal of Leslie’s fortunes does not undermine or re-write the oppressive circumstances in which some women may find themselves once they surrender to marriage.

Miss Cornelia, a dominant figure in Anne’s House of Dreams, is the leading force in revealing the often dismal quality of wedded life. With her constant refrain, “Wasn’t that just like a man?” Miss Cornelia continually lists numerous abusive relationships: Ebenezer Milgrave thought he was dead and “used to rage at his wife

because she wouldn't bury him" (AHD 47); Fred Proctor drinks and neglects his wife and eight children (AHD 44); Jennie Dean's husband "led her an awful life--and he was courting his second wife while Jennie was dying" (AHD 48); Miss Cornelia's cousin, Flora, had eleven children and her husband, "a born tyrant," committed suicide (AHD 70); Billy Booth burned his wife's new suit because he thought other men were admiring her in church (AHD 113); when Horace Baxter hit financial difficulties, he prayed for assistance. His wife died, leaving her life insurance and he felt it was an answer to his prayers (AHD 91). The list seems endless. Miss Cornelia is an avowed man-hater, and Anne learns "to discount largely Miss Cornelia's opinions of the Four Winds men" (AHD 133). Anne's dismissal of Miss Cornelia's rampages does not erase the impact they have on the reader, however. Her stories act as a gloss to the happy marriages, like Anne and Gilbert's, pointing out how easily they could be abusive.

Miss Cornelia, like Leslie Moore, undergoes a radical transformation in this novel. Quite against her own feelings about men and marriage and against everyone's expectations, Miss Cornelia marries Marshall Elliott. Remarkably, like Emma Woodhouse of Jane Austen's Emma, Miss Cornelia negotiates arrangements to suit herself. Marshall will be moving in with her, even though the expectation would be that she would live with him. Exceptionally, the community continues to refer to her as "Miss Cornelia" long after her wedding. She, unlike many of the suffering women she describes and unlike Anne who becomes "Mrs. Doctor," manages to retain her home and sense of identity.

Miss Cornelia is not the only character who has stories of oppressive marriages. When Di asks Susan, the housekeeper, if she likes being an old maid, Susan says, "no." "'But,' added Susan, remembering the lot of some wives she knew, 'I have learned that there are compensations'" (AIn 162). The implication is that, if she were married, her life might not be pleasant. When the Ladies Aid has their quilting bee at

Ingleside, the conversation inevitably turns to relationships. Mrs. Roger Carey murdered her husband and was never punished because “she was driven to desperation” (AIn 209). The lady continues, “Of course nobody approves of murder as a habit but if ever a man deserved to be murdered Roger Carey did” (AIn 209). There is a suggestion, too, that Mrs. Bruce Duncan is herself in an awful situation. She bitterly claims to have been asking God for something for twenty years. “They could all guess what she had asked for . . . but it was not a thing to be discussed at a quilting” (AIn 210). Her wish remains unstated, but in the context of her bitterness and Mrs. Roger Carey’s story, the reader can determine that her marriage is not happy. By establishing the potential for subjugation and mistreatment, the sequels by all three authors underscore the heroines’ agency: they have managed, in the face of awful or constricting alternatives, to forge a positive environment for themselves.

The agency: authority, narration, happiness

In these sequels, each author’s heroine gradually diminishes as the focus of interest. Action in the novels may pivot around Ethel, Jo, and Anne, but they become increasingly secondary to the other characters. The Ward family in The Trial dominate the plot more than does Ethel. Likewise, the daily adventures of the boys and girls in Jo’s Boys and Little Men become the focus of the story. Anne, more than the other two characters, fades into the background of an elaborate panorama of eccentric, difficult, and amusing characters whose adventures form the novels. Regardless of their diminished positions within the sequels, the former heroines continue to negotiate the contradictions around them, establishing their agency: Ethel maintains the domestic authority achieved in The Daisy Chain; continuing on the same metafictional path seen in Little Women, Jo becomes her own narrator; and, like the younger Anne in Anne of Green Gables, the older Anne finds domestic happiness in a potentially violent world.

While Ethel seems to adopt a submissive domestic role in The Trial, an expected and encouraged role as I have already discussed, she actually wields much authority in the May family. The text is explicit about Ethel's ambiguous position. For example, Aubrey, Ethel's youngest brother, asserts himself against Ethel's authority "by a little of the good-humoured raillery and teasing that treated Ethel as the family butt, while she was really the family authority" (Yonge 4). Claudia Nelson agrees that Ethel has some kind of power within her family circle: "Ethel's achievement in quelling her natural self makes her the hub of the family, raises her status to that of helpmate to her father, and brings her the only power worth aspiring toward, the power of influence" (Nelson 21). Ethel's daily sacrifices and humble behaviour indicate that she has conformed to a domestic ideal that does not accord well with traditional power and authority: she explains to her sister Mary that creating a warm environment for their father, regardless of her own emotional state, is her duty. She says, "He will be terribly overworked, and unhappy, and he must not come home to find no one to talk to or to look cheerful" (Yonge 8). If Ethel falters in her domestic duties to provide for others, moreover, she feels "shame and dismay" (Yonge 137).

Although Ethel appears to be subservient and accommodating, she is powerful. Nelson simplifies Ethel's power by labeling it a power of influence, implying that Ethel therefore has no agency or ability to act on her own. Ethel's exaggerated performance of her authoritative role around outsiders suggests that her power is active and not demure influence. Rather than risk a lack of acknowledgement by outsiders for her central role in the family, she emphasizes her position of authority. For example, when Ethel is to take Aubrey to the sea-side and Dr. May asks her to include Leonard Ward, she is distressed. She feels that the inclusion of another boy will "make Aubrey into the mere shame-faced, sister-hating commonplace creature that the collective boy thinks it due himself to be in society. . . and me from an enjoying sister into an elderly, care-taking, despised spinster--a burden to myself and the boys" (Yonge 28). In order for

Ethel to retain authority, once an outsider is included, she will have to exaggerate the role to a dramatic degree: she will have to be “elderly, infuse as much vinegar into my countenance as possible, wear my spectacles, and walk at a staid pace up and down the parade” (Yonge 28). Indeed, she is regarded by the community as “the stiff, plain Miss May” (Yonge 32), suggesting that she puts on this performance regularly.

Mr. Cheviot’s responses to Ethel illuminate the extent of her authority over the Mays, as well as community perceptions of her role in the family. Her power certainly seems to be more active and intrusive than that of “influence” would be. As Cheviot subtly courts Mary, he obviously has much ado to contend with Ethel’s manner. She herself feels that her attempts to engage him in conversation are “replied to with a condescending levity that reduced Ethel to her girlhood’s awkward sense of forwardness and presumption” (Yonge 218). This statement suggests that her behaviour is interpreted by the man as forward and presumptuous. Flora explains to Ethel that Cheviot is a man who likes to be in control and “will resent any thing that he thinks management from you.” She continues, “I suspect it is a real sign of the love that you deny, that he has ventured on the sister of a clever woman, living close by, and a good deal looked up to” (Yonge 220). Flora’s comments show the respect that Ethel has commanded not only in her domestic sphere but in the greater community. Flora advises Ethel to use more tact in order to “prevent Charles Cheviot from being so afraid of you, as if he saw at once how really the head of the family you are” (Yonge 220). That the patriarchal schoolmaster, Mr. Cheviot, can be “afraid” of Ethel and her power demonstrates that she is, indeed, far from being a suppliant spinster daughter.

Furthermore, the repeated pairing of her with Dr. May, through references to the similarity of their appearance, as in The Daisy Chain, suggests that she is not only authoritative in the family, but also comes as close to patriarchal power as possible, being female. She is labeled the “doctor in petticoats” by schoolboys, for example (Yonge 65). The doctor views Ethel as “his other self” and shares his painful secrets

only with her (Yonge 160). Her subservient and self-sacrificial behaviour, then, allows her to get closer and closer to her father, and, ultimately, closer to being the patriarchal authority herself, as he comes to rely on her judgment. For example, the other children approach Dr. May through Ethel, knowing how much the man listens to his daughter: Tom May, dismayed by Averil's condition in America, asks Ethel how she can remain passive. "But what could I do?" she asks. To which, he replies, "Stir up my father to interfere," showing the power Tom feels she has (Yonge 204). Ethel and her father also end the novel together. The last action of the novel is Dr. May telling Ethel how he feels about Tom and Averil, "as he and Ethel walked away together" (Yonge 364). She remains her father's closest confidante to the very end.

Ethel's close relationship with her father, and her proximity to patriarchal authority, sheds light on her repeated evasion of romance. Foster and Simons question Ethel's devotion to her father in The Daisy Chain: "In resisting 'normal' female sexuality, and rejecting it for ethical criteria, is Ethel asserting her independence of conventional gendered behaviour or merely enacting another traditional female role, that of self-abnegation?" (Foster and Simons 81). They continue to question her single status: "Does Ethel's refusal to abandon her father . . . indicate a refusal or inability to face the conditions, social and sexual, of mature adulthood?" (Foster and Simons 82). Foster and Simons do not answer these provoking questions, questions which remain relevant. Rather than denying herself maturity or adopting self-sacrifice, however, Ethel is eschewing romance in order to maintain the proximity to patriarchal authority she gains through her relationship to her father.

The text repeatedly indicates a potential for romance between Ethel and young Leonard Ward. Ethel's relationship with Leonard is presented as that of a religious mentor and a student, in which Ethel brings Leonard to a point of submissive enlightenment. However, the erotic undertones and her intense enjoyment of her influence suggest romantic possibilities. Leonard finds Ethel beautiful when no one

has before (Yonge 47). Tom reveals to Ethel that Leonard loves her by saying, "Blind Cupid is nothing to him" (Yonge 57). The boy visits the Mays to see Ethel (Yonge 59), and he finds in Ethel the inspiration to succeed (Yonge 62). Moreover, Leonard fights a schoolmate who ridicules Ethel's looks, a gesture which brings tears to her eyes. She shows the longing she has for this kind of love when she muses:

If I were ten years younger, this might be serious . . . Happily it is only a droll adventure for me in my old age, and I have heard say that a little raving for a grown-up woman is a wholesome sort of delusion at his time of life. So I need not worry about it, and it is pretty and touching while it lasts. (Yonge 66)

When Ethel tries to convince Leonard not to leave his brother to work for his unconscionable uncle, she is unsuccessful. Yonge's confusing passage describing this interview in which Leonard proves to be Ethel's match, uses language of power and domination often associated with eroticism: "Her influence had not succeeded, but it had not snapped; the boy in all his wilfulness, had been too much for her, and she could no longer condemn and throw him off!" (Yonge 116). Later, Dr. May explains to Ethel how touched Leonard was that she believes in his innocence. Ethel's response this time seems demure and self-congratulatory: "Ethel's lips moved into a strange half smile, and she took Mab on her lap, and fondled her" (Yonge 149). The focus on her lips, the strangeness, and the fondling bespeak a sensuality and a coyness that one might not readily associate with religious earnestness. Furthermore, her exclamation when she hears of Leonard's conviction suggests that her interest in the boy is not simply religious: "There was never any one beyond our own selves that loved me so well. I always knew it would not last--that it ought not; but oh! it was endearing" (Yonge 182). When Mary reassures her that their father will let Ethel go to Leonard, "Ethel's lips gave a strange sort of smile," recalling her earlier coy response (Yonge 182). The text refuses to define the smile--it was "strange." This ambiguity informs the tone of their relationship and not only Ethel's responses.

The text presents another potential romance for Ethel in the character of Dr. Spencer, an old bachelor friend of Dr. May's who now shares in his practice. Dr. Spencer travels with Ethel and the boys to the sea-side at Coombe. His behaviour towards Ethel is suggestive of courtship: "He was in high spirits, and the pink of courtesy; extremely flattered by the charge of Ethel, and making her the ostensible object of his attention" (Yonge 36). The language-- "courtesy," "flattered," "object of attention"--is that of chivalry. Dr. Spencer and Ethel go out for an evening stroll on the beach together where Ethel does not perceive "her companion's eyes fixed on her, half curiously, half sadly" (Yonge 38). He confesses that he had been in love with her mother and exiled himself for years so he would not interfere with his best friend's happiness. His love for the deceased Mrs. May explains his gaze upon Ethel; yet, she is still placed in the position of lover. He says to her: "It is strange! My one vision was of walking on the sea-shore with her; and that just doing so with you should have brought up the whole as fresh as five-and-thirty years ago!" (Yonge 39). Ethel responds by wishing she were more like her mother, a wish which carries a multiplicity of meanings. Of course, she would like to be more like the angelic Mrs. May, who embodied domestic perfection. Perhaps, too, she wants to be more like the woman who inspired such passion in Dr. Spencer. Conversely, she is informing him that she is not like her mother, and thus not romantically interested in him. This potential for romance between Ethel and Dr. Spencer does not go unnoticed by others. Tom exclaims to Ethel, "Did he ever make you an offer? I have sometimes suspected it" (Yonge 245). Ethel nevertheless evades romantic attachments by regarding one potential suitor as a fatherly figure and the other as a son or brother. Over both she establishes and maintains some kind of power--the power of influence over Leonard and the power of knowing Dr. Spencer's secret. Moreover, because she does not enter into a romantic involvement, Ethel's primary relationship remains with her father. She thus maintains her authoritative position within the family.

In both Little Men and Jo's Boys, Jo shrinks to the background of the children's daily lives but her voice becomes the vehicle for the novels, firmly establishing her agency in creating her own story. Jo's character becomes almost saintly as she administers to the children's needs and desires. Discussing Alcott's concept of the co-educational school, Elbert writes, "For all her energy in depicting a brave new world, Alcott cannot make its inhabitants compelling" (Elbert 320). This statement is particularly true for Jo. The boys revere her; she is an ever-present angel in the house, sitting by sickbeds, wiping away tears, and settling arguments in unobtrusive ways. She becomes a self-sacrificial character. Even her dreams are no longer for herself:

Mrs. Jo sat smiling over her book as she built castles in the air, just as she used to do when a girl, only then they were for herself, and now they were for other people, which is the reason that some of them came to pass in reality--for charity is an excellent foundation to build anything upon. (LM 157)

Yet, in Jo's Boys, Jo's dreams for herself have been fulfilled: "Money, fame, and plenty of the work I love" (JB 1). She does seem to have some small regret about her life choices, evident in her very disavowal of one: "I sometimes feel as if I'd missed my vocation and ought to have remained single; but my duty seemed to point this way, and I don't regret it" (JB 16).

At the same time that she is saintly and domestic, Jo retains a strong sense of the imperfections and character she had in Little Women. She explains to Nat, for example, that he must try to be good and love being good. She confesses, "it is hard work sometimes, I know very well" (LM 30). She still uses "Christopher Columbus" as an exclamation; but, she has given the dog that name so no one will think that she is coming close to swearing (LM 34). She admits to needing patience in order to deal with the boys (LM 43). She also has little patience for domestic duties. In trying to amuse Daisy, Jo decides to create a little working kitchen. Meg tells Daisy, "It is kind

of her to play it with you, because she does not like it very well herself” (LM 64). Her personality is still considered topsy-turvy. When the boys surprise her with a kite, “Mrs. Jo enjoyed hers immensely, and it acted as if it knew who owned it, for it came tumbling down head first when least expected, caught on trees, nearly pitched into the river, and finally darted away to such great heights that it looked a mere speck among the clouds” (LM 142-43). While the kite mirrors Jo’s desire to escape to great heights, it also reflects the unsteady personality that readers loved in Little Women.

Perhaps the most intriguing indication of Jo’s agency is the metafictional elements that permeate the sequels, as they did Little Women. Through repeated references to herself as a children’s writer and the narrator’s comments about the fictional March family, combined paradoxically with truth-claims, Jo’s writing becomes a predominant focus in Jo’s Boys. Moreover, the lines between narrator and character become blurred by the metafictional references; thus, Jo’s voice is firmly established because she becomes her own narrator. Her identity, while retreating from the action, becomes instead the vehicle of the novel. Jo’s writing career blossoms after she is married. She still gets into “a vortex” when she writes, as she did in Little Women (JB 8). In chapter three of Jo’s Boys, entitled “Jo’s Last Scrape,” the title suggesting how much Jo will retreat from the main action of the rest of the novel, the text becomes extremely self-reflexive, confounding Jo and the narrator.² The narrator explains Jo’s literary history, which the reader knows from Little Women: “A book for girls being wanted by a certain publisher, she hastily scribbled a little story describing a few scenes and adventures in the lives of herself and her sisters--though boys were more in her line--and with very slight hopes of success sent it out to seek its fortune” (JB 35). Having written a book that can only be Little Women, Jo finds herself wealthy and famous. Instead of feeling strictly happy, however, Jo begins “to resent her loss of liberty” as she finds that the adoring public is very demanding (JB 37). This lack of liberty is “the worst scrape of her life; for liberty had always been her dearest

possession” (JB 38). She denigrates her work by calling herself “only a literary nursery-maid who provides moral pap for the young,” which puts an ironic twist into the story (JB 39). In a book written for children, the protagonist denigrates the very types of children’s books she writes and in which she is a character. The text seems to be collapsing itself: while it presents a highly moral universe, populated by young people on the road to development and improvement, it also suggests that such literature is “moral pap” and not to be taken seriously. If Jo, the preeminent dispenser of moral wisdom to the boys in the novel, can be disdainful of moralizing, then she undermines her own position in the novel. In so doing, she paradoxically elevates her own power by emphasizing that she is the creator of the tale.

The truth-claims in Little Men and Jo’s Boys blur the boundaries between narrator and protagonist. This blurring serves to establish Jo as the narrator of her own story, further underscoring her agency. In Little Men, the narrator first claims that “there is no particular plan to this story” (LM 118). Then she assures her “honoured readers that most of the incidents are taken from real life, and that the oddest are the truest” (LM 118). The reader knows that Jo is a children’s writer and, if the events in the story are true, then Jo would not be only a fictional character. Similarly in Jo’s Boys, when Jo is reading her fan mail, she shares a poem she has received with some of her boys: “While the boys shouted over this effusion--which is a true one--their mother read several liberal offers from budding magazines for her to edit them gratis” (JB 42). In making this truth-claim, the narrator suggests she is culling the poem from her own resources of fan mail. The truth-claims suggest that Jo is narrating her own story. Jo’s control over her own story becomes explicit when she writes a play for the school to perform. She says: “I wanted to show that the mother was the heroine. . . . I’m tired of love-sick girls and runaway wives. We’ll prove that there’s romance in old women also” (JB 214). Jo does prove, in the novel before the reader as well as in the play, that the mother can be the heroine. She writes her own role and thus re-writes

traditional narratives that focus on the excitement of love relationships and marital problems.

The narrator's last words again cast the whole novel in an ironic light. She claims, "it is a strong temptation to the weary historian to close the present tale with an earthquake which should engulf Plumfield and its environs so deeply in the bowels of the earth that no youthful Schliemann could ever find a vestige of it" (JB 324). Here again, the narrator shows distaste for her own story, a story that is at once her own creation and her own construction of herself. Contrary to her earlier truth-claims and her label of weary historian, she now asserts the fictionality of the text: "Having endeavoured to suit everyone by many weddings, few deaths, and as much prosperity as the eternal fitness of things will permit, let the music stop, the lights die out, and the curtain fall forever on the March family" (JB 325). Rather than a true history, then, the story is, like the play performed by Plumfield, a fictional creation by a children's writer. Since Jo is also a successful children's writer who wrote a book very much like Little Women, it follows that she is also the narrator, writing herself into and out of existence. In establishing Jo as the writer of her own story, Alcott manages to create a powerful sense of identity for the matriarch who inevitably fades into the background of the plot lines--Jo's voice is the vehicle for the last two novels. Indeed, the more she becomes secondary to the plot, the more Jo's voice becomes synonymous with the narrator's, highlighting her active agency.

In Montgomery's sequels,³ like Yonge's and Alcott's, the heroine recedes into the background of mostly episodic plots. Gillian Thomas believes that Anne moves from being a "spirited individualist" in the first novel to "a rather dreary conformist" in the last (Thomas 23). However, her academic prowess and her writing still inform the novels. She may wear "soberness like a garment," but she retains some element of her power of negotiation (RI 85). While Thomas suggests that some of the later Anne novels "touch on much darker themes" than the earlier ones, she claims that "the idea

that some marriages can be unfulfilling or destructive is scarcely allowed to intrude on Anne's world" (Thomas 25, 28). Thomas believes that the later novels are unrealistic and celebratory. They are not. As I have shown, the sequels present a continuing discourse on destructive marriages which I will argue highlights Anne's agency in creating marital and domestic harmony.

Anne is undeniably disappointing in the sequels as critics have pointed out.⁴ A glance at the titles show her being contained after marriage. Anne of Avonlea and Anne of the Island suggest Anne's continual expansion into larger communities. Then she is identified with houses as she is in the first novel, Anne of Green Gables: Anne of Windy Poplars, Anne's House of Dreams, and Anne of Ingleside. Finally, she disappears from the titles altogether in Rainbow Valley and Rilla of Ingleside. In accordance with the titles, Anne's power and force of personality diminishes to that of keeping her family together and happy. In Anne of Ingleside, for example, Anne anticipates the family's reunion after the birth of her youngest child: "She would hold all the threads of the Ingleside life in her hands again to weave into a tapestry of beauty" (AIn 55). Her power seems to be connected only to family responsibility. Indeed, the very metaphor of the tapestry is domestic. When an old university friend asks her if she finds rural, domestic life dull, Anne "almost laughed" (AIn 56). Her litany of reasons for not possibly finding life dull are not particularly exciting, besides her new baby: visits from old friends to prepare for, Gilbert's work, the childrens' and cats' exploits. The reader might agree that life at Ingleside is not overly-fulfilling for a character like Anne. For the first time since Anne of Green Gables, Anne voices discontent in Anne of Ingleside which belies the claim that she does not find life at Ingleside dull: "Everything annoyed her these days. A little mannerism of Gilbert's she had never minded before got on her nerves. She was sick-and-tired of never-ending, monotonous duties. . . sick-and-tired of catering to her family's whims" (AIn 257). Anne herself seems to find her role as matriarch of Ingleside rather disappointing.

Alongside this acknowledgment of the constraints of Anne's role, however, constraints that Thomas feels Anne "willingly accepts" (Thomas 24), are repeated references to Anne's academic activities and her writing. While Anne seems to have become only "Mrs. Doctor," she also maintains her own identity outside of marriage. Before marriage, Anne wins a scholarship and leads her class at Redmond. Her B.A. is mentioned frequently in later novels as a focus of her identity. While her academic prowess cannot be carried through the later novels, since she is no longer at school or teaching, her writing remains a subtle but insistent note in the texts. In Anne of the Island, she confesses to Diana that she wishes to write a story. This confession is followed by publishers' rejections until, through Diana's intervention, Anne wins the Rollings Reliable short story contest, much to her mortification. She swears off writing, until she comes across an old manuscript and resolves to try again. Finally, she meets with success. Anne of Windy Poplars also refers to Anne's writing, although more indirectly. In a letter to Gilbert, Anne writes, "Ever since Rebecca Dew discovered that I do an occasional bit of fiction for the magazines she has lived in the fear. . . or hope, I don't know which. . . that I'll put everything that happens at Windy Poplars into a story" (AWP 39). Anne is still being published, even though her writing is not a dominant focus of the text. The townsfolk of Summerside regard Anne as always culling experience for her fiction. Her young friend, Hazel, blames Anne's writing for what she sees as Anne's interference in her romance: "Perhaps you wanted material for a story," Hazel writes to her, "and thought you could find it in the first, sweet, tremulous love of a girl" (AWP 189). Miss Tomgallon invites Anne to dinner and regales her with horrifying stories of the Tomgallon clan. She suggests her motivation when she says to Anne, "They tell me you're writing a book about everyone in Summerside" (AWP 239). Anne disclaims the rumour. In Anne of Ingleside, Aunt Mary Maria believes that Anne's children are poorly behaved because their mother "wrote for the papers" (AIn 23). Even as late as Rainbow Valley, the seventh book

which is almost entirely about Anne's children, little Walter is teased by other children who yell, "Your mother writes lies--lies--lies!" indicating that Anne's writing career is still active (RV 120).

Despite her apparent, although understated, literary success, Anne greets any mention of her work with humble self-denigration. In Anne's House of Dreams, Paul lets the reader know how much Anne has been publishing: "You may be famous yourself, Teacher. I've seen a good deal of your work these last three years" (AHD 15). Anne responds with pretty disavowals, "I can do nothing big" (AHD 15). She repeats her belief in her limitations when Gilbert tries to convince her to write Captain Jim's life story. She claims that "it's not in the power of my gift. You know what my forte is, Gilbert--the fanciful, the fairylike, the pretty" (AHD 107). To Owen Ford, the writer, she voices the same sentiments: "I do little things for children," she demurs when asked about her work, "I haven't done much since I was married. And I have no designs on the great Canadian novel" (AHD 138). When Mrs. Mitchell wants Anne to write an obituary, she asks, "You writes things don't you?," to which, Anne replies: "Occasionally I do write a little story . . . But a busy mother hasn't much time for that. I had wonderful dreams once but now I'm afraid I'll never be in Who's Who" (AIn 117). Anne betrays regret that her aspirations will never be fulfilled. Yet, at the same time, the repeated references to her writing show that she has not given up hope.

However Anne denigrates her abilities, other characters envy the power inherent in them. Miss Cornelia, like many of the people in the Summerside of Anne of Windy Poplars, sees Anne's writing as a potentially powerful tool for enacting vengeance on one's community: "Oh, Anne, I wish I could write like you, believe *me*. Wouldn't I scare some of the men around her!" (AHD 113). Rebecca Dew wanted Anne to "write up the Pringles and blister them" (AWP 39). Like Alcott's sequels, a metafictional element permeates the Anne books. The references to Anne's writing, and her writing of fanciful children's stories in particular, suggests that she could be the producer of

her own story. The irony of metafiction lies in the fact that the Pringles are being “written up and blistered” even while Anne claims to have “scant time for writing fiction” (AWP 39). Anne of Windy Poplars is written by Anne herself in the form of letters to Gilbert. Anne is, in this novel, telling her own story, constructing her own narrative, acting, like Jo did, as her own narrator. Therefore, Anne’s voice is highlighted in an extremely subtle fashion, even as she fades into the background of the novels. Even in her self-effacing comments about her literary aims, Anne affirms herself as capable of writing the very children’s book that the reader holds. Most intriguing, Anne’s disavowals of literary expertise and success repeatedly draw attention to her literary productivity and aspirations.

Anne’s role of wife, and not of writer, is the dominant one in the sequels, however. While this acceptance of a subservient role--that of “Mrs. Doctor”-- may not seem particularly empowering, in the context of the oppressive and abusive marriages around her, Anne’s ability to foster a happy marriage is a skillful negotiation. Her relationship with Gilbert is not free from distress, highlighting her ability to create harmony. In Anne’s House of Dreams, for example, she must learn that Gilbert makes the right decisions. They argue whether to tell Leslie Moore that her supposed husband can be cured. Anne adamantly believes that they should leave well enough alone. Gilbert believes in his duty as a doctor to do everything in his power to cure patients, regardless of who they are. When the cure leads to the discovery that the man is not Leslie’s husband at all, Anne has to admit herself in the wrong. She must come to trust in Gilbert’s judgment, even if it is counter to her own. Anne’s House of Dreams also contains a hint of jealousy that will manifest itself more overtly in Anne of Ingleside. After Leslie leaves the Blythe’s one evening, Anne comments on Leslie’s appearance. Gilbert responds by agreeing that Leslie is very beautiful, “so heartily that Anne almost wished he was a *little* less enthusiastic” (AHD 81). In Anne of Ingleside, the troubles between Gilbert and Anne become a focus of the story. A seemingly innocuous

reference to Rilla's interpretation of her father's career casts him in a rather ominous shadow. Anne does not laugh when she discovers that Rilla thinks her father is a murderer (AIn 225). This statement is de-contextualized and briefly mentioned, but it is disturbing even while it is not true. While he is not a murderer, his profession as a doctor causes him to be unpredictable and unreliable. As Anne returns from a visit to Avonlea, "she could never be sure Gilbert would meet her" (AIn 14). Her concern about her appearance, for Gilbert's sake, seems heightened in this novel as well. She wears a frilly blouse on the return train, even though Mrs. Lynde is disapproving. But Anne thinks to herself as Gilbert greets her, "If I hadn't [worn it] I wouldn't have looked so nice for Gilbert" (AIn 15). Even while she works hard to gain his attention, Anne does not have control over Gilbert's sexuality. Miss Cornelia warns Anne that Leona Shaw will be trying to flirt with the doctor, now that she is home from the States to nurse her mother (AIn 158). By the end of the novel, Anne feels irritated and neglected by Gilbert. He does not notice her outfits, does not call her his pet name for her, and kisses her only out of habit. She convinces herself that he does not love her anymore and believes that it may be due to her age (AIn 258-59). When an invitation arrives for them to get together with Christine Stuart, his old flame from Redmond, Anne faces the event with dignity and burning jealousy. After having convinced herself of his lack of love, Anne is delighted to discover that he's simply been overworked, consumed by one special case in which he makes a breakthrough, and has not forgotten their anniversary after all. In addition, he finds Christine Stuart a pretentious bore. While Anne's concerns and fears are wiped away in Anne of Ingleside, their very presence again demonstrates the vulnerability of women in marriages. That Anne manages a happy union underscores her negotiation and her agency: the texts assert that a wife's lot can be devastating.

The conclusion

I have repeatedly attempted to show the heroine's agency, through her negotiations of the various contradictory forces at play upon her. To see the heroine as an active agent in her own story, while her movements may be curtailed and her options limited, is liberatory. Even in the sequels, in which the former heroines' roles are secondary, the women continue to display agency. Ethel, Jo, and Anne, while often relatively powerless, are not victims. This is why we readers love these girls. They do not merely capitulate to patriarchal or familial pressures; rather, they are crafty in their apparent accommodation and slippery negotiations, continually revising and altering the cultural scripts they have inherited.

Moreover, as I argued in chapter one, the authors underscore their own agency in rewriting the scripts. Seemingly aware of the didactic potential of their own stories, Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery wrote to educate their readers. Each heroine is, quite significantly, a teacher: Ethel teaches at Cocks Moor, Jo works as a governess in New York, and Anne is a schoolteacher. By placing the heroine in less-than-ideal circumstances, by insisting on her inability to conform adequately to social dictates, and by drawing attention to her limited options, each author highlights the heroine's ability to negotiate for a happy ending. The reader learns about the powerful skill of negotiation. When power and freedom and absolute control over one's destiny seem impossible, when dominant ideology seems inescapable, when one must conform, negotiating is an empowering solution. Each moment of articulation, each self-construction, opens a possibility for change.

As Ethel, Jo, and Anne reach down to generations of readers, they sing out for female empowerment in a world that seems to hold limited options for young women. We laugh with them, we cry with them, and ultimately we learn from them. We learn where we can be strong, where we can be weak, what we can get away with. Each author has in effect written a survival manual for her young readers: the world is not

always a nice place, they say, but you can make it work for you. This message does not espouse complacency, but agency.

Eleanor H. Porter's Pollyanna does not accept with complacency the fact that her entire family has died, and she must live with an uncaring aunt. If she did, she would not have to use the glad game to make her unhappy situation happy. She works very hard to bring happiness to the world around her because she realizes, as small and as relatively powerless as she is, that her comfort rests on the people who have power over her. She succeeds in bringing joy into her aunt's life, and therefore transforms her own existence. This transformation is the power espoused by girls' stories, a power wrested from powerlessness, an agency derived from necessity, but a power nonetheless.

That is perhaps each author's lasting tribute. In their textual negotiations, they not only create feisty heroines who rebel and survive, but they also transform the old scripts, revising genres and feminine roles. They hand down to generations of readers books that assert the fact that new feminine identities, new stories, can be forged from the old. Look closely, the texts seem to whisper, what looks like accommodation or capitulation is often breathless rebellion or quiet revision. Girls, like Ethel, Jo, and Anne, can make their own happy endings and play their own glad games, just as Yonge, Alcott, and Montgomery did in their novels.

The whole town is playing the [glad] game, and the whole town is wonderfully happier--and all because of one little girl who taught the people a new game, and how to play it.

--Eleanor H. Porter

Notes

¹ Arguably, these writers, particularly Alcott and Montgomery, wrote sequels not from some elaborately thought-out plan but rather due to publishers' and financial pressures. Despite the author's individual motivations for continuing the stories of their heroines, their works come to us as a collection that defies the containment of a single-volume novel.

² Many critics have gone to great lengths to establish a parallel not between Jo and the narrator, but between Alcott and Jo. The similarities are fascinating: the number of sisters, the similar struggles of Jo and Alcott as reflected in Alcott's journals, the deaths, the personalities and interests of the girls, the similarity of the names and so on. In this chapter, I am interested in the extent to which Jo and her narrator share similarities. In chapter one, conversely, I presented a reading that suggested Alcott wrote with the intent to educate, collapsing to a degree the distinction between author and narrator. In now collapsing the distinction between character and narrator, however, I am not arguing that Jo is Alcott. This autobiographical approach is outside the scope of my present study.

³ Rather than examine the Anne books in the order they were written as Elizabeth Epperly does, I have chosen to study them as they cover the chronology of Anne's life. Anne of Windy Poplars (1936) and Anne of Ingleside (1939) were added much later to fill in the gaps in Anne's life. In addition, other works like Chronicles of Avonlea (1912) and The Road to Yesterday (1974) make reference to Anne. I have chosen not to explore them because Anne is treated in them only indirectly.

⁴ See Epperly's The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass and Gillian Thomas's "The Decline of Anne" for example.

Works Cited

- Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, eds. The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development. Hanover NH: UP of New England, 1983.
- Åhmansson, Gabriella. A Life and Its Mirrors: A Feminist Reading of L.M. Montgomery's Fiction. Vol. 1. Sweden: U of Uppsala P, 1991.
- Alcott, Lousia May. Jo's Boys. 1886. London: Dent, 1960.
- . Little Men: Life at Plumfield with Jo's Boys. 1871. Boston: Roberts, 1888.
- . Little Women. 1868-69. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Adams, Ian. "The Ambivalence of The Mill on the Floss." George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute. Eds. Gordon S. Haight and Rosemary T. Van Arsdel. London: MacMillan Press, 1982: 122-136.
- Althusser, Louis. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Argosy, The (May 1894): 10.
- Armstrong, Frances. "'Here Little, and Hereafter Bliss': Little Women and the Deferral of Greatness." American Literature 64.3 (September 1992): 453-74.
- Auerbach, Nina. Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Austen, Jane. Emma. New York: Dell, 1961.
- Barrett, Michèle, and Mary McIntosh. The Anti-Social Family. Second Edition. London: Verso, 1991.
- Baruch, Elaine Hoffman. "The Feminine Bildungsroman: Education Through Marriage." The Massachusetts Review 22.2 (Summer 1981): 335-57.
- Bassil, Veronica. "The Artist at Home: The Domestication of Louisa May Alcott." Studies in American Fiction 15.2 (Autumn 1987): 187-97.

- Battiscombe, Georgina. Afterword. The Clever Woman of the Family, by Charlotte M. Yonge. London: Virago, 1985: 368-372.
- Benjamin, Jessica. The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination. NY: Pantheon, 1988.
- Berg, Temma F. "Anne of Green Gables: A Girl's Reading." Children's Literature Association Quarterly 13.3 (1988): 124-28.
- Bernstein, Susan Naomi. "Writing and Little Women: Alcott's Rhetoric of Subversion." American Transcendental Quarterly 7.1 (March 1993): 25-43.
- Black, Linda. "Louisa May Alcott's Huckleberry Finn." Mark Twain Journal 21.2 (Summer 1982): 15-17.
- Black, Martha Fodaski. "The Quintessence of Chopinism." Kate Chopin Reconsidered: Beyond the Bayou. Eds. Lynda S. Boren and Sara deSaussure Davis. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1992: 95-113.
- Brophy, Brigid. "Sentimentality and Louisa M. Alcott." Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott. Ed. Madeleine B. Stern. Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1984: 93-96.
- Brown, Penny. The Captured World: The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in England. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- Brownstein, Rachel M. Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels. New York: Viking, 1982.
- Buckley, Jerome. Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974.
- Bunyan, John. The Pilgrim's Progress. New York: Signet Classic, 1964.
- Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. NY: Routledge, 1990.

- Cadogan, Mary, and Patricia Craig. You're a Brick, Angela! A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839-1975. London: Victor Gollancz, 1976.
- Campbell, Donna M. "Sentimental Conventions and Self-Protection: Little Women and The Wide, Wide World." Legacy 11.2 (1994): 118-129.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985.
- Chopin, Kate. "The Awakening." The Awakening and Selected Stories. Ed. Barbara H. Solomon. New York: New American Library, 1976: 1-125.
- Cobbett, William. Advice to Young Men. London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1829.
- Cott, Nancy. The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835". New Haven: Yale UP, 1977.
- Crowley, John W. "Little Women and the Boy-Book." The New England Quarterly 58.3 (September 1985): 384-99.
- Dalsimer, Katherine. Female Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Works of Literature. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.
- Dean, Misao. A Different Point of View: Sara Jeannette Duncan. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1991.
- De Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. Trans. Steven F. Kendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.
- Delamont, Sara, and Lorna Duffin, eds. The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World. London: Croom Helm, 1978.
- De Lauretis, Teresa. Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- Dennis, Barbara. "The Two Voices of Charlotte Yonge." Durham University Journal 34 : 181-88.
- Dickens, Charles. Great Expectations. London: Penguin, 1985.

- Drain, Susan. "Community and the Individual in Anne of Green Gables: The Meaning of Belonging." Children's Literature Association Quarterly 11.1 (1986): 15-19.
- . "Feminine Convention and Female Identity: The Persistent Challenge of Anne of Green Gables." Canadian Children's Literature 65 (1992): 40-47.
- Duncan, Sara Jeannette. A Daughter of Today. Ed. Misao Dean. Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1988.
- DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Writers. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985
- Elbert, Sarah. A Hunger For Home: Lousia May Alcott and Little Women. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1984.
- Eliot, George. The Mill on the Floss. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980.
- Epperly, Elizabeth Rollins. The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass: L.M. Montgomery's Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992.
- Feder, Ellen K., and Eva Feder Kittay, eds. Hypatia: The Family and Feminist Theory (Special Issue) 11.1 (Winter 1996).
- Fetterley, Judith. "Little Women: Alcott's Civil War" Feminist Studies 5 (1979): 369-83.
- . "Impersonating 'Little Women': The Radicalism of Alcott's 'Behind a Mask'." Women's Studies 10 (1984): 1-14.
- Fish, Stanley. There's no such thing as free speech, and it's a good thing too. NY: Oxford UP, 1994.
- . Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies. Durham: Duke UP, 1989.
- Foster, Shirley, and Judy Simons. What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls. Iowa City: U Iowa P, 1995.

- Fraiman, Susan. Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development. NY: Columbia UP, 1993.
- Fuderer, Laura Sue. The Female Bildungsroman in English: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism. NY: Modern Language Association of America, 1990.
- Gaard, Greta. "Self-Denial was all the Fashion: Repressing Anger in Little Women." Papers on Language and Literature 27.1 (Winter 1991): 3-19.
- Gay, Carol. "'Kindred Spirits' All: Green Gables Revisited." Children's Literature Association Quarterly 11.1 (1986): 9-12.
- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984.
- Greer, Germaine. The Female Eunuch. London: Paladin, 1970.
- Harrington, Stephanie. "Does Little Women Belittle Women?" Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott. Ed. Madeleine B. Stern. Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1984: 110-112.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn G. "Louisa May Alcott: The Influence of Little Women." Women, the Arts, and the 1920s in Paris and New York. Eds. Kenneth W. Wheeler and Virginia Lee Lussier. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982: 20-26.
- Hekman, Susan. "Subjects and Agents: the Question for Feminism." Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice. Ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995: 194-207.
- Hennessey, Rosemary. "Women's Lives/Feminist Knowledge: Feminist Standpoint as Ideology Critique." Hypatia 8.1 (Winter 1993): 14-34.

- Hovet, Grace Ann, and Theodore R. Hovet. "Tableaux Vivants: Masculine Vision and Feminine Reflections in Novels by Warner, Alcott, Stowe, and Wharton." American Transcendental Quarterly 7.4 (December 1993): 335-56.
- Howe, Susanne. Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life. NY: A.M.S. Press, 1966.
- Huf, Linda. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature. NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1988.
- "The Ideal Marriage: Practical Suggestions for those Contemplating Matrimony." Halifax Herald (12 October 1901): 8.
- Janeway, Elizabeth. "Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, and Louisa." Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott. Ed. Madeleine B. Stern. Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1984: 97-98.
- Joyce, James. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. NY: Penguin, 1976.
- Kerber, Linda K. "Can a Woman Be an Individual? The Limits of Puritan Tradition in the Early Republic." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 25.1 (Spring 1983): 165-78.
- Keyser, Elizabeth Lennox. Whispers in the Dark: The Fiction of Louisa May Alcott. Knoxville: U Tennessee P, 1993.
- Kornfeld, Eve, and Susan Jackson. "The Female Bildungsroman in Nineteenth-Century America: Parameters of a Vision." Journal of American Culture 10.4 (Winter 1987): 69-75.
- Labovitz, Ester Kleinbord. The Myth of the Heroine: The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century. Second Edition. New York: Peter Lang, 1988.
- Latimer, Dan, ed. Contemporary Critical Theory. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

- Levine, George. "Intelligence as Deception: The Mill on the Floss." George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. George R. Creeger. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970: 107-123.
- Light, Beth, and Alison Prentice, eds. Pioneer and Gentlewomen of British North America 1713-1867. Documents in Canadian Women's History Vol 1. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1980.
- MacLulich, T.D. "L.M. Montgomery's Portraits of the Artist: Realism, Idealism, and the Domestic Imagination." English Studies in Canada 11.4 (December 1985): 459-73.
- McEwen, Christian, ed. Jo's Girls. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.
- Meigs, Cornelia, Anne Thaxter Eaton, Elizabeth Nesbitt, and Ruth Hill Viguers. A Critical History of Children's Literature. Revised Ed. London: MacMillan, 1969.
- Messer-Davidow, Ellen. "Acting Otherwise." Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice. Ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner. Urbana: U Illinois P, 1995: 23-51.
- Mocnik, Rastko. "Ideology and Fantasy." The Althusserian Legacy. Eds. Ann E. Kaplan, and Michael Sprinker. London: Verso, 1993: 139-56.
- Montgomery, L.M. Anne of Avonlea. 1909. Toronto: Seal Books, 1984.
- . Anne of Green Gables. 1908. Toronto: Seal Books, no date.
- . Anne's House of Dreams. 1917. Toronto: Seal Books, 1983.
- . Anne of Ingleside. 1939. Toronto: Seal Books, 1983.
- . Anne of the Island. 1915. Toronto: Seal Books, 1981.
- . Anne of Windy Poplars. 1936. Toronto: Seal Books, 1983.
- . Emily of New Moon. 1923. Toronto: Seal Books, 1983.
- . Rainbow Valley. 1919. Toronto: Seal Books, 1988.
- . Rilla of Ingleside. 1921. Toronto: Seal Books, 1989.

- Moretti, Franco. The Way of the World: the Bildungsroman in European Culture. London: Verso, 1987.
- Munro, Alice. Lives of Girls and Women. Scarborough, ON: Signet, 1974.
- Nelson, Claudia. Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction 1857-1917. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1991.
- Newton, Judith, and Deborah Rosenfelt. "Introduction: Towards a Feminist-Materialist Criticism." Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class, and Race in Literature and Culture. Eds. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt. NY: Methuen, 1985: xv-xxxix.
- Nodelman, Perry. The Pleasures of Children's Literature. NY: Longman, 1992.
- O'Brien, Sharon. "Tomboyism and Adolescent Conflict: Three Nineteenth-Century Case Studies." Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History. Ed. Mary Kelley. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979: 351-72.
- Poovey, Mary. Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.
- Porter, Eleanor H. Pollyanna: The Glad Book. NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1946.
- Pratt, Annis, with Barbara White, Andrea Loewenstein, and Mary Weyer. Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.
- Reynolds, Kimberley. Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.
- Robinson, Lillian S. Sex, Class, and Culture. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.
- Ross, Catharine Sheldrick. "Calling Back the Ghost of the Old-Time Heroine: Duncan, Montgomery, Atwood, Laurence, and Munro." Studies in Canadian Literature 4 (Winter 1979): 43-58.
- Rubio, Mary. "Subverting the Trite: L.M. Montgomery's 'room of her own'." Canadian Children's Literature 65 (1992): 6-39.

- Russ, Lavinia. "Not To Be Read on Sunday." Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott. Ed. Madeleine B. Stern. Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1984: 99-102.
- Sandbach-Dahlström, Catherine. Be Good Sweet Maid: Charlotte Yonge's Domestic Fiction: A Study in Dogmatic Purpose and Fictional Form. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell, 1984.
- Santelmann, Patricia Kelly. "Written as Women Write: Anne of Green Gables within the Female Literary Tradition." Harvesting Thistles: The Textual Garden of L.M. Montgomery: Essays on Her Novels and Journals. Ed. Mary Henley Rubio. Guelph, ON: Canadian Children's Press, 1994: 64-73.
- Segal, Elizabeth. "As the Twig is Bent . . .": Gender and Childhood Reading." Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts. Eds. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1986: 165-187.
- Shaffner, Randolph P. The Apprenticeship Novel: A Study of the Bildungsroman as a Regulative Type in Western Literature with a Focus on Three Classic Representatives by Goethe, Maugham, and Mann. NY: Peter Lang, 1984.
- Scheckels, Theodore F. Jr. "In Search of Structures for the Stories of Girls and Women: L.M. Montgomery's Life-Long Struggle." The American Review of Canadian Studies 23.4 (Winter 1993): 523-38
- Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977.
- . Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- . "Tradition and the Female Talent: The Awakening as a Solitary Book." New Essays on The Awakening. Ed. Wendy Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988: 33-57.

Simpson, Harold H. Cavendish: Its History, Its People. Amherst, NS: Harold H. Simpson and Associates Limited, 1973.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. The Adolescent Idea: Mythos of Youth and the Adult Imagination. NY: Basic Books Inc., 1981.

---. The Female Imagination. NY: Knopf, 1975.

Stephens, John. Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction. London: Longman, 1992.

Stern, Madeleine, ed. Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. Kidnapped. London: T.Nelson & Sons, nd.

Stimpson, Catharine R. "Reading for Love: Canons, Paracanons, and Whistling Jo March." New Literary History 21.4 (Autumn 1990): 957-76.

Tennyson, Alfred. Idylls of the King and a Selection of Poems. NY: Signet, 1961.

Thomas, Gillian. "The Decline of Anne: Matron vs. Child." L.M. Montgomery: An Assessment. Ed. John Robert Sorfleet. Guelph, ON: Canadian Children's P, 1976: 23-28.

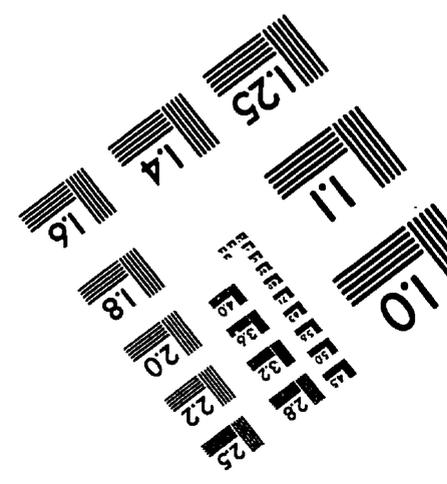
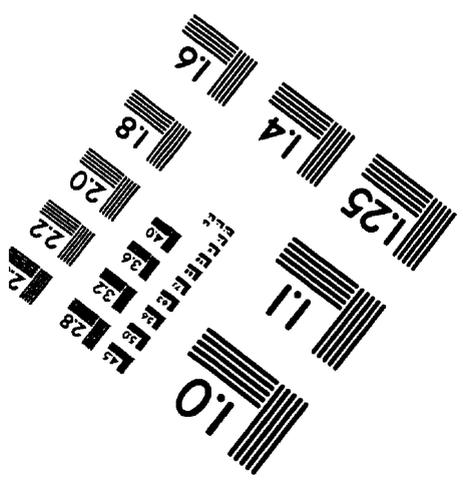
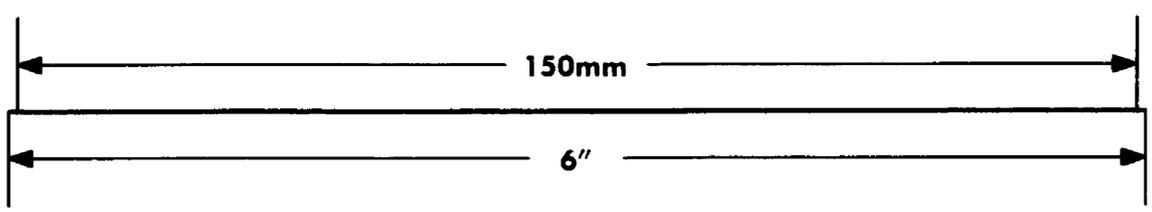
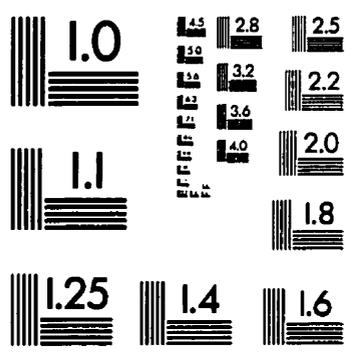
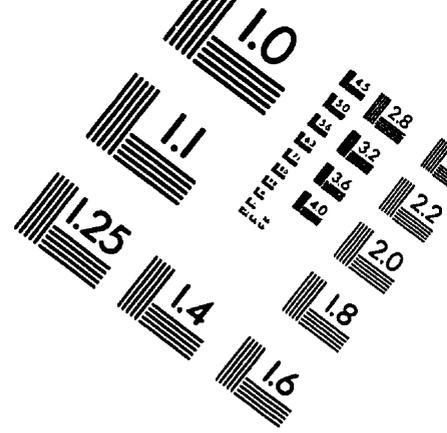
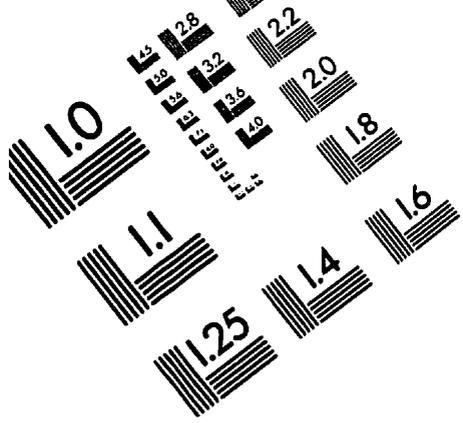
Thorne, Barrie, with Marilyn Yalom, eds. Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions. NY: Longman, 1982.

Turner, Graeme. British Cultural Studies. London: Routledge, 1995.

Twain, Mark. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. The American Tradition in Literature. 6th ed. Vol 2. Eds. George Perkins, Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long. New York: Random House, 1985: 194-367.

Walters, Karla. "Seeking Home: Secularizing the quest for the celestial city in Little Women and The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." Reform and Counterreform:

- Dialectics of the Word in Western Christianity since Luther. Ed. John C. Hawley. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994: 153-171.
- Weedon, Chris. Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Weiss-Town, Janet. "Sexism Down on the Farm? Anne of Green Gables." Children's Literature Association Quarterly 11.1 (1986): 12-15.
- "What Pleases a Woman." Daily Examiner (18 October 1897): [4].
- White, Barbara A. Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Willis, Lesley. "The Bogus Ugly Duckling: Anne Shirley Unmasked." Dalhousie Review 56: 247-51.
- Winn, Harbour. "Echoes of Literary Sisterhood: Louisa May Alcott and Kate Chopin." Studies in American Fiction 20.2 (Autumn 1992): 205-208.
- Yonge, Charlotte M. The Clever Woman of the Family. 1865. London: Virago, 1985.
- . The Daisy Chain, or Aspirations, a Family Chronicle. 1856. London: MacMillan & Co., 1880.
- . The Heir of Redclyffe. 1854. London: MacMillan & Co., 1909.
- . The Trial; More Links of the Daisy Chain. 3rd Ed. London: MacMillan & Co., 1898.



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved