

7-2015

## The Spectacle of Orphanhood: Reimagining Orphans in Postbellum Fiction

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The Spectacle of Orphanhood: Reimagining Orphans in Postbellum Fiction

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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## **Abstract**

Orphan iconography has always been deployed in American literature and culture, but nineteenth-century American literature, fiction in particular, abounds in orphans, both real and imaginary. The orphan's amphibious nature is hailed and demonized as the epitome of individualism and unbridled freedom, and also as the location of society's anxiety. This complicated and conflicted construction of orphans animates the social and cultural realm in postbellum America, foregrounding issues of class, race, and gender.

## **Acknowledgements**

I owe special thanks to Dr. Keith M. Booker for his valuable comments, advice and time. Without his insight this dissertation would not have materialized. Thanks also to Dr. Susan Marren and Dr. Charles H. Adams for their feedback and valuable insights. I further express gratitude to Dr. Patrick Slattery, Dr. Elias Dominguez Barajas, and Dr. Leigh Pryor for the support rendered during my research. Special thanks are due to the David Mullins library at the University of Arkansas for the exhaustive collection of books and the Interlibrary Loan Office for arranging all the books and articles that helped me conduct this research. Special thanks are due to the staff of the University of Arkansas Graduate School for their help with this dissertation. Daddy, Mummy, Abbu and Ammi-your constant support and faith always inspired me. Most importantly, I owe my heartfelt thanks to my dear husband whose sacrifice, patience and support made this dissertation possible. My daughters, Filza and Zaria, who may have had to sacrifice the most.

## **Dedication**

Iqbal & Daddy

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## Introduction

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;  
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;  
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;  
 From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;  
     Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!  
     But I, with mournful tread,  
     Walk the deck my captain lies,  
     Fallen cold and dead.

(Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" *Leaves of Grass*)

Writing in 1865, Walt Whitman borrows orphan imagery to illustrate his sorrow at the death of Abraham Lincoln, the metaphorical father, and to emphasize the orphaned state of America following the Civil War. Although Whitman's elegy uses the words "father" and "Captain" interchangeably to establish both a sense of intimacy and distance, the somber poem creates a sense of loss and dispossession—sentiments commonly experienced by orphan children. Orphan iconography has been indispensable to American literature and culture from the very beginning, but nineteenth-century American literature, fiction in particular, abounds in orphans, both metaphorical and real.<sup>1</sup> Portrayals of orphans in postbellum American literature are even more noteworthy. This study examines the portrayal of orphans in American fiction and non-fiction from the postbellum to the fin de siècle (1865 to 1898) and presents them as both

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<sup>1</sup> In *The American Adam*, R.W.B. Lewis suggests that after the Great Revolution of 1812 "The new habits to be engendered on the new American scene were suggested by the image of a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources" (5). Lewis claims that such a description of the new American Adam was replete with orphan imagery.

desirable and disturbing; thus, simultaneously inviting and thwarting society's desire for their assimilation and justifying societal intervention.<sup>2</sup> The orphan's amphibious nature is hailed and demonized as the epitome of individualism and unbridled freedom, and also as the location of society's anxiety. This complicated and conflicted construction of orphans animates postbellum social and cultural realm in America, foregrounding issues of race, class, and gender. The significance of the orphan figure continues in twentieth-century America literature and results in the creation of a separate field within literature: children's literature. In children's literature, the central character is either a real orphan or is orphaned temporarily, offering the child reader a vicarious experience of orphanhood to prepare them for the travails of life.

The word orphan has multiple connotations. Scholars frequently use the word to express metaphorical as well as real orphanhood. Adults belonging to different races, like African Americans, Native Indians, Asian Americans, and mixed blood people were metaphorical orphans in nineteenth-century America. Although metaphorical and real orphanhood overlapped, this study mostly concentrates on real orphans through the intersections of race, class, and gender. In attempting an epistemological reading of orphans, this study draws examples from fiction and non-fiction produced in postbellum America. Nineteenth-century literary texts, written by both male and female writers, document the whole range of cultural practices pertaining to orphans that were prevalent in those times. As the culture itself struggled for a

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis mentions that according to some historians there is "an inherent dualism in American intellectual thought," and he contends that not two but three distinct voices can be identified: "American culture has traditionally consisted of the productive and lively interplay of all three...the party of Hope and the party of Memory. For the third party, there is no proper name: unless we call it the party of Irony" (7). Although there is some merit in Lewis's claim, this research focuses on the inherent dualism.



definitive solution to the orphan problem, these narratives participate in and contribute to the orphan discourse through their various depictions of orphans, sometimes critiquing a particular practice or the entire practice of suppressing the orphan's free spirit, and at other times praising other practices. Ranging from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) to Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), *Little Men* (1871), *Eight Cousins* (1875) and *An Old-Fashioned Girl* (1869), to Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1890) and Mrs. Amelia E. Johnson's *Clarence and Corinne, Or God's Way* (1890), postbellum writers contribute to the ongoing discourse on orphans. This study concentrates on the varied representations of orphans and the full scope of the cultural anxiety at play. In doing so, it argues that these narratives provided their contemporary readers a means to engage in a serious discussion about the orphan problem and to offer possible solutions.

Orphans appear in the American literary firmament to both validate and invalidate anxieties and concerns about their assimilation and future role in society. Their ubiquity in postbellum fiction calls for an appraisal of their circumstances and role in society. The real orphans of nineteenth-century America embody not only their own real struggles in society but also of the nation at crucial moments in the country's history. The orphan's fate intertwined with the nation's fate; and even though the nation's orphan status was celebrated, the attitude towards the real orphans of the nation was a cause for concern. Although metaphorical and real orphanhood intersected, successful orphans were celebrated while the struggling orphan children living in orphan asylums were reviled.<sup>3</sup> Explaining the presence of orphans in American

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<sup>3</sup> In her book, *Orphans: Real and Imaginary*, Eileen Simpson discusses the different types of orphans and relies on the words 'real' and 'imaginary' to describe the two types of orphans in America. I rely on 'metaphorical' instead of 'imaginary' because I feel it is more

Literature, Diana Pazicky states, “Orphan imagery appears as a response to the social upheaval and the internal tensions generated by three major episodes in American history: the Great Migration, the Revolution, and the rise of the republic” (xiii). In addition to the epochs in American history Pazicky points out, the orphan crisis became even more acute after the Civil War. The nation’s fate mirrored that of the real and metaphorical orphans, who were tossed and turned from one home to another after the war. Historically, the orphan possesses a unique resilience that can overcome all odds making it suitable to represent the nation’s story as well. Nina Auerbach notes that “[the orphan’s] capacity for perpetual rebirth, his continual ability to shuck off the past and begin life anew, a lonely freedom appropriate to a being who is without a past to begin with”<sup>4</sup> (398) is very pertinent to how America envisioned itself, and this capacity “simultaneously embodies and repudiates” (395) the Reconstruction era writers’ attempts to write the orphan’s story. Similarly, the orphan, as a liminal being, simultaneously allows and repudiates society’s pressure to conform to its rules. America’s liminal status vis-à-vis Europe resembled the orphan’s status and shaped America since its inception. Crises in American history concur with metaphorical and real orphanhood. From the first European settlers to scores of immigrants pouring into the shores in the nineteenth century, metaphorical orphanhood has always been relied on to delineate a quintessential American experience. As succeeding generations of migrants coped with metaphorical orphanhood, the experiences of real orphans of the nation, although more heartrending, are dismissed by many writers.

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pertinent when implying marginalized adults in literature, who, like real orphans, were excluded from the new republic.

<sup>4</sup> Auerbach’s article is particularly useful to this study. Not only does she trace the history of the orphan’s presence in European literature but she also connects the orphan to the novel, a genre she considers especially fit to render the orphan’s story. She focusses primarily on the depiction of “the wandering orphan” (who shares attributes with the wandering Jew, the metaphorical orphan in the European context), and looks at some prominent English novels like *Moll Flanders*, *Pamela*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Great Expectations*.

Before delving into the impact of the orphan on the cultural and literary arena, an understanding of the word orphan in its nineteenth century context will be useful. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an orphan is “A person, *esp.* a child, both of whose parents are dead (or, rarely, one of whose parents have died).” While the primary usage of the word is associated with a child who has lost both the parents, the dictionary adds an extended use of the word which implies that the word can be used for an abandoned or neglected child too. On the other hand, *Merriam-Webster*, whose definition is more pertinent to this research owing to its American origins, defines an orphan as “a child deprived by death of one or usually both parents” and adds that “one deprived of some protection or advantage” could also be referred as an orphan. Based on these two definitions, the term “orphan” can be understood to denote both a child who has lost both parents through death, and even a solitary child, abandoned by one or both parents, without adult supervision and control. The word was also often used in conjunction with adjectives of quantity, like full or half, to emphasize the exact situation of the child in question. A full-orphan was usually the preferred word to describe a child who had lost both parents as a result of death, while half-orphan was used for children who had lost one parent. A desire to quantify orphans, either to assess their situation, worth or value, has been central to the orphan discourse and the culture’s obsession with these unfortunate children. The word was further complicated when it was used to designate abandoned children, both born in and out of wedlock (sometimes with both parents alive), mostly belonging to indigent homes. Claudia Nelson succinctly explains the different uses of the word “orphan”:

Indeed, the very word “orphan” may be understood not only in terms of its dictionary meaning, but also as a rhetorical ploy designed to elicit a particular emotional response from its nineteenth-century audience, since in addition to children who had lost one or both parents to death, “orphans” frequently included abandoned children, illegitimate children, and the offspring of the destitute or deprived. (3)

Although the word “orphan” was a euphemism, its currency in nineteenth-century culture did retain some pejorative intonations usually associated with its less respectable synonyms: foundling, waif, street Arab, ragamuffin. Quite interestingly, the popular term used to describe orphans was “little street Arabs.” The use of the word “Arab,” which expresses ethnicity, conjures up a whole discourse of stereotyping and exclusion of the Orientals<sup>5</sup>. The orphan discourse that flourished in the nineteenth century saw the orphan as the social “other”; hence, to be an orphan was socially undesirable.

The orphan figure is believed to have entered western literature sometime around the sixteenth century in Europe and shared many attributes with the wandering Jew (Auerbach 398-400). Like the wandering Jew, who was depicted as the cultural other and a threat to Europe’s social order, the orphan was portrayed similarly. Orphan fiction in England and early America before the nineteenth century usually presented the orphan figure approaching manhood or womanhood. The main focus of the orphan’s portrayal in European literature was to chart his social trajectory as he gradually climbed the social ladder of respectability (Auerbach 398-400). Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) are among the more notable works on orphans that were produced in the eighteenth century. In some ways, both these works tend to emphasize the upward mobility of the orphan figure as a desired goal.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In *Orientalism*, Said argues that for centuries Europe has depicted the Near East or the Levant, which he terms the Orient as the cultural “other.” In defining itself, the binary of the “other” serves an important role. Hence, all reprehensible attributes or traits are heaped on this “other,” who serves as a scapegoat. The popular adjective of the orphan in the nineteenth century, “the little street Arab” is redolent of a similar desire to brand the unschooled and uncared orphan on the streets of American cities as the “other,” as the receptacle of society’s scorn.

<sup>6</sup> According to Auerbach, the orphan in the English novel is almost always seeking upward mobility. She also informs us that the English novel’s bastard status among the other

Nineteenth-century American fiction continues in this tradition, but it also adds to the depiction of orphans. Instead of merely focusing on upward mobility, postbellum American fiction explored the orphan's soul and character. Through moral suasion and coercion, the orphans' character and soul are molded in such a manner that they serve as obedient citizens of the new republic. Their inherent freedom from any control is replaced by society's supervision and control over them as these literary works concentrate on employing and making orphans useful and industrious. Concentrating on the orphan's soul and character, some postbellum fiction try to subdue their free spirit by reinforcing the prevalent social codes. Since the Civil War dispensed with slavery, the labor demand increased and orphans offered the prospect of gainful employment. As such, the orphan's deployment in postbellum American literature is both unique and troubling. Many similarities between the real orphan and the orphaned nation complicate and animate the literature. The overwhelming feeling of loss and dispossession experienced by them is further heightened in the years after the Civil War as the number of orphans increase.

The provenance of the orphan figure in the nineteenth century is also an outcome of an obsession with children that defined America from its conception. The Puritans refashioned their children—the future citizens of America—in ways that would serve the purpose of the new country, to guide it in the path of progress. Specifically, the trope of the orphan child is very pertinent to the notion of nation-building in America. Whichever way we see the orphan, as a bastard or an abandoned child, the founding fathers used the orphan trope recurrently. Almost everyone in America in those early days was an orphan, either real or metaphorical. The passage to the New World had made many children orphans as well. Since the earliest days in the New

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literary genres and the fact that it came into existence to mostly render the orphan experience make them very compatible.

World, the orphan's care has been a national concern and multiple solutions to solve it were considered. According to Pazicky, in some cases close relatives and the community found ways to take care of the child out of sympathy (10). Not only children, but adults living alone (without a family) were also tied to a family. Conversely, Claudia Nelson claims that, "the America of 1850 inherited from colonial days a tradition of dealing with displaced children by putting them to work—or, alternatively, by encouraging them to leave town so that any money spent on them would come out of someone else's pocket" (9). While caring for the orphan was enjoined upon everyone, a debate about the money spent in their care was also part of the culture. This seems to have continued in postbellum times. In a lecture at an orphanage, Mark Twain appealed to the audience thus:

Don't be afraid of giving too much to the orphans, for however much you give, you have the easiest end of the bargain. Some persons have to take care of these orphans, and they have to wash them. Orphans have to be washed! And it's no small job, either, for they have only one wash tub and it's slow business. They can't wash but one orphan at a time. They have to be washed in the most elaborate detail, and by the time they get through with the sixty, the original orphan has to be washed again... There is a suspicion of impurity and imposition about many ostensibly benevolent enterprises, but there is no taint of reproach upon this for the benefit of these waifs upon the sea of life, and I hope your benevolence will not stop here. (qtd. in Lorch 455)

Twain candidly explains that caring for the orphan was cumbersome, while donating money was "the easiest end of the bargain". Orphan fiction recapitulates a similar late nineteenth-century debate about what to do with the dependent child, a debate in which there is a gradual shift in the dominant culture's impulse: from an insistence on nurturing the parentless child to professing the benefits of hiring them.

Among other things, the orphan came to symbolize financial burden, which translated into a concern about whose money and how much should be spent on their care. Coupled with the desire to reduce the ill-effects of his surrounding was a desire to make the orphan useful to

society. The shift from founding of orphanages to placing the child in foster homes was aimed at making the orphan self-sufficient and not a burden on public funds. The various experiments with orphans in this period reflect what was central in the public imagination. Foster care was considered beneficial because it would solve two problems simultaneously. The labor shortage in the South and the Mid-West in the Reconstruction years could be met by employing orphans. This would stave off the expense involved in taking care of the orphans. With the economic interest of the nation in mind, these orphans become contested territory for society, especially the burgeoning middle-class. The growing middle-class created its own identity in relation to the other classes, especially the working class, in the hope of distinctly separating its ideology and belief as different. In forming its identity, the middle-class presents the working class as its anti-thesis. Likewise, the middle-class child (even the orphan) is the normative, while the working class orphan is frequently characterized as deviant. As Pazicky avers,

During these periods, the orphan trope signifies a threat to the identity of the dominant culture, which eventually became the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle-class, whose interests and values are represented in the texts. Those who considered themselves the natural or adopted “children” of that “family” came to fear orphanhood and needed scapegoats onto whom their identification with orphanhood could be displaced. The targets of such displacement were groups of marginalized racial, religious, and ethnic outsiders—Negroes, Indians, and immigrants—who represented difference. By becoming cultural “orphans,” they enabled the “children” to protect their identity within the family of the colony or the republic”. (xiii)

Pazicky succinctly explains the prejudices against the real orphans belonging mostly to the lower classes and considers people of color as the cultural orphans in America. This prejudice is illustrated in Alcott’s *Little Men* and *Jo’s Boys*, where Dan O’Keefe is presented as a threat from his first appearance in *Little Men*, which is reinforced repeatedly in the sequel. On the other hand, in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain subverts the prejudice to present Huck as the more pragmatic orphan.

This perception of the orphan as a burden on public coffers shaped their rehabilitation. Though some communities continued to find alternate homes for children, mostly and preferably with relatives, cities primarily looked for useful means of taking care of the growing number of orphans. In the early part of the nineteenth century, orphans were usually housed in almshouses or poorhouses along with adult paupers and criminals. Growing concern regarding the harms of this practice helped found orphanages that would be devoted solely to the care of orphan children. The first orphanage in America was founded in New Orleans in 1727 under the auspices of Louis XV. Soon they began to proliferate. Between 1800 and 1830, fifteen orphan asylums opened under the auspices of private Catholic and Protestant charities. In the 1830s, orphanages, as well as reformatories for disobedient children, showed a significant increase. Twenty-three of both were founded by the 1840s. By 1850 there were twenty-seven private and public child-care institutions in New York State alone that had become viable alternatives to apprenticeship rather than mere dumping grounds (Pazicky140).<sup>7</sup> Due to lack of funds, the number of public orphanages gradually dwindled and were replaced by private ones, signaling upper class involvement in the care of orphans. In New York, the Children's Aid Society, a Protestant organization, started the orphan train movement which moved New York orphans to the rural areas in the West, purportedly to convert the Catholic orphans of mostly Irish immigrants who accounted for a big chunk of the orphan population and also to put them to work (Pazicky144). Under the pretext of their assimilation, these Protestant institutions usually placed them out to Protestant homes, where they were gradually converted (Pazicky145). Regarding this silent and unprecedented social engineering, Timothy Hacsí notes that "orphan asylums helped

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to Pazicky, in *Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America*, Timothy A. Hacsí chronicles the growth of orphan asylums and cultural attitudes toward orphan care through the nineteenth century.



shape more poor children's lives than any other American social institution except public schools and churches" (1). The institutionalization of orphan children in nineteenth-century America, under the guise of helping them, in reality was an attempt to convert them into Protestantism, exclude them from middle class white society, and to mobilize them to meet labor demands (Pazicky139). The fate of the Native Indian and African American orphans was quite similar.<sup>8</sup> Their exclusion was justified on the basis of their supposed arcane religious practices and savage lifestyle.<sup>9</sup> Inclusion and acceptance in American society was contingent upon Christian practices, hence requiring them to adhere to the dominant discourse.

In fin-de-siècle America, as children's value in a family changed the emotional value of a child from upper and middle class homes increased and matched the increase in the economic value of orphan children (owing to the absence of rich parents who would invest in their emotional capital).<sup>10</sup> This new value (rather devalue) of the orphan child was instrumental in professionalizing social workers, fueling the publishing industry, keeping lawmakers busy drafting new legislation to keep pace with changes in demographics (especially after the Civil War), and running the whole enterprise of the orphan trains. The concern for the orphan was less

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<sup>8</sup> Hacsí mentions that most orphan asylums cared for only white children from different ethnic backgrounds and black children were rarely housed in them, but there were orphan asylums for children of color. Mixed asylums were very few. Hacsí informs us that, "It is unfortunately not surprising that, like the rest of American society, orphan asylums tended to be highly segregated and far more available to white children than nonwhite children. It is also unsurprising that this situation did not change all that much between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1930" (p.122).

<sup>9</sup> Pazicky points out that the earliest Puritan settlers identified themselves as orphans—persecuted and forced to leave their homeland. Ironically, they exercised similar religious persecution and social and economic discrimination of the Indians (p. xiv).

<sup>10</sup> Viviana Zelizer points out that during the fin de siècle, the child gradually emerged as emotionally priceless and economically useless (as opposed to earlier centuries when children were considered economically useful), but interestingly this applied merely to the native-born white children of different ethnicities, not black or Native American children.

a real concern for the orphans and more a concern to profit from their situation, driven by a self-serving ideology. The care of the orphan thus becomes a profitable venture for many.

At such a time, Charles L. Brace, a Protestant social worker in New York, took on the task of finding “suitable” homes for the “little street Arabs” wandering in the streets of New York. Brace’s ideas pertaining to orphans reflect the culture’s anxiety about the growing number of orphans in urban areas, especially New York, which were impacted by rapid industrialization, mass immigration, and epidemics. Their palpable presence on the streets in urban areas was anathema and continued to pose new threats. In concert, new ideas about child rearing, particularly ideas which emphasized the presence of a nurturing environment, animated the debate offering skeptics like Brace the hope of assimilating them into America by engaging them in labor in the rural Mid-West. Brace borrowed the idea of the orphan trains from a practice in Boston in the 1830s. While assimilating these orphans into the dominant culture became the stated purpose, “placing out” of urban orphans in reality was actually an attempt to exclude them from urban spaces. Brace’s non-fictional writing, devoted specifically to the “little street Arabs,” not only molded notions about orphans and their care but also launched a movement to wipe their past and rewrite their future according to the dominant ideology, both religious and economic. Brace launched a diatribe against what he terms “the dangerous classes.” He states,

But the virtues of the poor spring very much from their affections and instincts; they have comparatively little self-control, the high lessons of duty and consideration for others are seldom stamped on them, and Religion does not much influence their more delicate relations with those associated with them. They might shelter a strange orphan for years with the greatest kindness; but the bearing and forbearing with the faults of another person's child year after year, merely from motives of duty or affection to its parent, belong to a higher range of Christian virtues, to which they seldom attain. Their own want of self-control and their tendency to jealousy, and little understanding of true self-sacrifice, combine to weaken and embitter these relations with step-children. The children themselves have plenty of faults, and have doubtless been little governed, so that soon both parties jar and rub against one another; and as neither have instincts or

affections to fall back upon, mere principle or sense of duty is not enough to restrain them. What would be simply slights or jars in more controlled persons, become collisions in this class. (39-40)

Brace fixes his gaze on the children of the poor and places them before the collective cultural consciousness of the nation through his incisive critique of their life and manners. For Brace, orphans, mostly belonging to these “dangerous classes,” possess awkward social graces and can be easily identified. In the fashion of Orientalist discourse, Brace’s reduction of orphans, as children of poor working class Irish immigrant families, dismisses the possibility of any uniqueness in them and constructs them as inferior. Although his professed aim was to improve their lives, Brace was propagating a distrustful and stereotypical view of the immigrants, particularly the Irish, as he expounds:

The “dangerous classes” of New York are mainly American-born, but the children of Irish and German immigrants. They are as ignorant as London flash-men or costermongers. They are far more brutal than the peasantry from whom they descend, and they are much banded together, in associations, such as “Dead Rabbit,” “Plug-ugly,” and various target companies. They are our *enfants perdus*, grown up to young manhood. The murder of an unoffending old man, like Mr. Rogers, is nothing to them. They are ready for any offense or crime, however degraded or bloody. New York has never experienced the full effect of the nurture of these youthful ruffians as she will one day. They showed their hand only slightly in the riots during the war. At present, they are like the athletes and gladiators of the Roman demagogues. They are the “roughs” who sustain the ward politicians, and frighten honest voters. (italics in original 27-28)

Continuing his criticism, he attributes these social predispositions to a lack of good forces or positive experiences in their lives: “The result is then, with the worst-endowed families, that the “gemmules” or latent forces of hundreds of virtuous, or at least, not vicious, generations, lie hid in their constitutions” (45). The solution he offers is to send them off to the Mid-west, because according to him

The demand for labor on this land [unlimited area of arable land in the United States] is beyond any present supply. Moreover, the cultivators of the soil are in America our most solid and intelligent class. From the nature of their circumstances, their laborers, or

“help,” must be members of their families, and share in their social tone. It is, accordingly, of the utmost importance to them to train up children who shall aid in their work, and be associates of their own children. A servant who is nothing but a servant, would be, with them, disagreeable and inconvenient. They like to educate their own “help.” With their overflowing supply of food also, each new mouth in the household brings no drain on their means. Children are a blessing, and the mere feeding of a young boy or girl is not considered at all. (225)

Thus, Brace and the Children’s Aid Society draw their plan of sending orphans from New York City to the countryside. Although to Brace, children of both Irish and German immigrant (in addition to some Italians) constitute the “dangerous classes,” Pazicky points out that cultural attitudes toward them differed as she quotes a visitor to the society: “it is a fact worth noticing, that of all the many children who came under our operations, very seldom, indeed, is ever one an American or a Protestant. The Irish emigrants are generally more degraded, even than the German. They rise more slowly, and are cursed with that scourge of their race—intemperance” (145). Simpson, too, concurs that although Brace considered children of immigrants deprived and called for their removal from New York City, a vast majority were children of Irish emigrants. Native American and African-American orphans do not fall under the purview of Brace’s treatise primarily because it concentrated on the conditions in New York City. Presumably, he did not or may not have encountered them in large numbers to consider them a threat. In the South, though, many orphanages were built to house the growing number of orphans as orphan slave-children were numerous, and uncared for in postbellum America. Not much is known about the Native American orphans as there seems to be a narrative silence regarding their plight. Although the word “orphan” is an inclusive word, in the postbellum literary realm, it was almost always used in connection with white children, both girls and boys.

Brace’s work and his writings generated a lot of interest in the orphan, especially children of Irish immigrants. The figure of the orphan he creates is both vague and specific. While the

word “orphan” seems to be vague and may be applied to any child who is orphaned or abandoned, in reality it was an attempt to put under intense scrutiny children of Roman Catholic Irish immigrants. Brace and his Children’s Aid Society launched a movement that would result in alienating rather than assimilating the children. Despite Brace’s claims that orphans would get a better life in the rural areas where he was sending them, many of these orphan’s experiences contradicted his claims. All attempt was made to sever the orphans from their past. They were not allowed to be in touch with their biological families and siblings were usually separated. Kate Miles reveals that “Though the Children’s Aid Society tried to keep brothers and sisters together, many times it was impossible. The entire experience reminded many orphans of a livestock sale or a slave auction” (55). There is an uncanny similarity with the Slave trade in the antebellum years. Lee Nailing, an orphan who was placed out by the Children’s Aid Society, reminisces about his experience:

And I knew this was going to happen to us [he refers to siblings getting separated]. The amazing thing was that it hadn’t yet. We were healthy youngsters, and someone looking for workers was bound to pick one of us sooner or later. There didn’t seem to be a thing in the world I could do to prevent it. I got back on the train that day with such a sense of dread that I felt like the world was going to end. As far as I was concerned, that might be the best thing that could happen. (Warren 42)

Nailing’s separation anxiety does come true as he and his siblings end up going to different homes. Furthermore, John E. B. Myers notes that, surprisingly, animal rights predate children’s rights in America. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Animals advocate Henry Blergh came to the rescue of Mary Allen Wilson, a half-orphan, when she was being abused by her foster mother. This episode is noteworthy as it helped create the New York Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1875. Mary Ellen Wilson’s story and similar stories of abuse of placed out children question Brace’s claims of the good that came out of the practice of placing out. In her autobiography, Wilson recounts being sexually assaulted by her foster father:

“Come here,” he said, standing by the bedroom door.

Mary Allen couldn't stop the tears that ran down her cheeks. “Papa—.”

“Now!”

She walked toward him, and he pulled her down onto the mattress. “You stay still now,” Papa said. “This will only hurt if you are bad.”

Mary Allen knew it was wrong. Whatever was happening, it was a bad thing she was doing.

She went to Papa and lay there with her eyes closed, the tears stopping, for she was already drifting to her special place, her safe place. (Shelman & Lazoritz 169)

Mary Wilson's account becomes more poignant when read in conjunction with Brace's

stereotypes of girls from lower classes whom he placed out in order to protect their chastity:

If a female child be born and brought up in a room of one of these tenement-houses, she loses very early the modesty which is the great shield of purity. Personal delicacy becomes almost unknown to her. Living, sleeping, and doing her work in the same apartment with men and boys of various ages, it is well-nigh impossible for her to retain any feminine reserve, and she passes almost unconsciously the line of purity at a very early age. (55)

These stereotypes about orphan children belonging to the immigrant working class were further pronounced and reinforced by Brace. Instead of helping them assimilate, Brace's incisive words were responsible for marginalizing and victimizing them further in a society that already resented them.

The orphan's vulnerability stems partly from the absence of adult control and thus, a lack of any allegiance, familial or religious. Often in the guise of charity, social engineers like Brace and other charitable organizations embrace the orphan figure in an attempt to intervene and interpellate<sup>11</sup> them into the dominant ideology of the time. In this sense, the orphan was a powerful symbol that cut across class lines and epitomized the frightening reality of social

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<sup>11</sup> The word interpellate relies on Althusser's use of the term and implies the different means and mechanisms through which institutions reinforce the dominant ideology in subjects.

vulnerability (Pazicky 139). The orphan condition is simultaneously an envied and unenvied state; symbolizing a life of unbridled freedom without parental or adult control (envied by children) and a life of waywardness because of a lack of adult supervision (unenvied by adults who never fail to attest the benefits of supervision).

One of the main arguments Brace and mid-century social reformers put forward in support of placing out was the numerous benefits that can result from living in rural surroundings. Living in a community or family as opposed to an institution was also presented as beneficial.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, living in the community further alienated the orphans. In a community, the orphan child saw himself in opposition to the normative child with parents, and is forced to develop a clear understanding of his own social position. Likewise, the orphan's presence offers the non-orphan an appreciation of his better fate. Thus, the dual conception of the child which characterized "children as both innocent and vulnerable and in need of protection (the child as victim) and also as impulsive, under-socialized and thus in need of guidance and control (the child as threat or villain)" (Parton 10), could be successfully played out for the benefit of the normative orphan or non-orphan child. What began in the early nineteenth century as the Child Study Movement (started by Charles Darwin's "A Biographical Sketch of an Infant" and focused on children in general),<sup>13</sup> transformed into an identification of orphans of working class families as 'the child as villain,' necessitating the need for increased intervention. Partly owing to the middle-class's "mood of social schizophrenia" (Pazicky 122), which viewed the

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<sup>12</sup> Hacsí and Pazicky trace the different practices that were popular in the nineteenth century. The more popular ones were "placing out" or "boarding out" orphans.

<sup>13</sup> In *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900*, Sally Shuttleworth notes that the Child Study Movement gained momentum in the nineteenth century and resulted in many changes in how the child was perceived. She attributes Darwin's study as being instrumental in this direction.

working class and immigrants as “the other” and turned them into scapegoats for society’s wrongs, the parentless orphan became an easy target. Just as children of the middle class were idolized as the great hope of the new republic, impoverished orphans were demonized as its nemesis (Pazicky 138).

Sometimes such prejudices helped the orphan adapt and survive in an adverse society. The orphan learned to negotiate his way through society by forming relations and learning to survive in the face of adversity by adapting in some unusual ways: by pretending to be cheerful, by learning to appeal to people physically and emotionally, and by standing out as remarkable in some aspect, by supplicating and trying to please, etc. Many orphan stories document these character traits in orphans. In *Orphan Train Riders: One Boy’s True Story*, Andrea Warren narrates the experience of three brothers—Lee, Leo, and Gerald—in Texas. After the death of their mother, their father separates the seven children. While Lee’s three older brother left home and had to earn their keep, the younger two were given to relatives. Describing his train ride to Texas from New York, he recounts:

Then a man and his wife stopped in front of Gerald. The woman spoke softly to Gerald and *he smiled at her* [italics mine]. When she opened her arms, he went right to her. Without a word to Lee and Leo, the couple walked away, holding Gerald. Lee wanted to run after them, to stop them, or to ask them to take him and Leo too. (43)

While this account of an orphan train rider illustrates the orphan’s desire to appease people, it is a desire that results from an acute understanding of his own powerlessness and abjectness. This account also points at the siblings’ despondency on being separated. For Brace, placing out orphans was imperative, but for the orphans it was traumatic.



In a literary imitation of *parens patriae*<sup>14</sup> (where the government intervenes in the interest of a child's proper upbringing and with the desire to offer suitable guidance to these neglected children), the writers of orphan narratives intervene in the lives of these literary orphans to improve their lives, and by doing so, invite readers to participate in that discussion as well. These narratives problematize and complicate the orphan's situation as they do the following: express anxieties about the orphan child, reproduce the popular fear of children from the dangerous classes and then subvert it, propagate the myth of juvenile delinquency as arising from working class backgrounds, invite readers to engage in social activism to counter the social engineering of the upper classes and middle classes against the working class immigrants, acknowledge the restricted liberty of children belonging to these classes, and offer child protagonists brief and momentary escape from the strict social control only to bring them back to the same society they resist. Hence, these narratives monitored every aspect of such children's lives and ensured they didn't go astray and thus become economically useless. The narratives in my study tend to reproduce these anxieties pertaining to orphans and the social conventions that were employed to socialize them and in some rare cases, subvert and question society's assumptions about orphans. The brief moments of true liberty some of these narratives allow the central characters, offer these characters, the writers (of these narratives), and readers an escape from society's constricting norms. The revolutionary potential and veiled social activism that some of these texts contain help instill these same ideas in the readers and often reflect the writer's own hidden resentment against society's strict regulations. While superficially these writers confirm society's regulations as necessary, implicit in some of these narratives is a hidden wish-fulfillment of their

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<sup>14</sup> This concept, borrowed from the British, entails that the government take charge of the children of poor and indigent families since the parents cannot fulfill their duties due to economic and social constraints.

desire to break society's shackles. Furthermore, these narratives critique the social engineering aimed at these children and promote social activism so that true liberty can be extended to every citizen. Hence, they invite readers, especially young readers, to re-envision and construct a future society different from the present.

This research relies on an overarching theoretical framework of Michel Foucault's and Edward Said's ideas. Foucault's ideas provide valuable insight in understanding the anxiety of the upper and middle class in general and the child savers of the nineteenth century in particular. According to Foucault's 'knowledge-power' nexus, biopower and/or biopolitical power wields an intangible control over society and individuals, simultaneously regulating and disciplining individuals. This power is believed to consist of two axes, one focused on the body as a machine which society and human consciousness tries to make useful through discipline, and the second focused on the supervision and regulation of the newly constituted population. Together these form two poles of the organization of 'power over life'" (Foucault 139). Defining the mechanism of the two poles, Nigel Parton notes,

The former has the effect of constituting the nature and dimensions of individuals, via the development of a range of new information in the form of reports and case files, while the latter has the effect of constituting the nature and key dimensions of a population, particularly via the development of statistics in relation to, for example, age, habits, activities, morbidity, mortality, health and crime, and the most clearly represented by the development of epidemiology. (13)

We see a similar development of knowledge pertaining to orphans in postbellum America. With advancements in new forms of knowledge about orphans, supervision and regulation increased. My main premise that orphans were depicted as a threat relies on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. The actual intervention in the lives of orphans and its literary imitation in the narratives I wish to study "are [not] activated by a desire to punish; they are intended to correct, reclaim, or

‘cure’” (Foucault 10), and to control “the individuals; not only what they do, but also what they are, will be, may be” (18). Many correspondences between Foucault’s ideas and the depiction of orphans in these narratives can be traced. As Foucault writes, “the replacement of punishment with discipline in the seventeenth century transferred the “power of judging ... to other authorities” (22). The child savers, belonging mostly to the upper and middle class, became the judges when it came to controlling the lives of the orphans. The orphan’s body and soul becomes a site of political economy as Foucault adduces:

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of power that is exercised on those punished-and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives. This is the historical reality of this soul, which, unlike the soul represented by the Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint. (29)

It is this idea of the soul that is evoked by Twain in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, when Huck proclaims, “All right, then, I’ll go to hell”. Once born, Huck’s soul refuses to be supervised or tamed, instead decides to follow its own dictates. Elaborating further on the mechanism of control exhibited over orphans and criminals, Foucault points out,

Idleness was seen to be the reason behind most crimes, hence, the idea of a house that would in a sense provide a universal pedagogy of work for those who proved resistant to it. This had four advantages...it would create a mass of new workers, which would bring down the labor cost, and lastly it would enable the true poor to benefit, to the full, from necessary charity. (121)

Thus, schools, orphanages, and prisons came into existence to teach the benefits of a work ethic.

Bentham’s panopticon, which is built “on the premise that power should be visible and unverifiable” (201) goes on to emphasize that a corrective institution “automatizes and disindividualizes power” (202), thereby producing “homogeneous effects of power” (202). The

narrative point-of-view of some of these orphan narratives serves as an inward panopticon, where the readers, along with the fictional society within the narrative, produce “the homogenous effects of power” over the orphans. The homogeneous effects of power, as described by Foucault, were employed through the doctrine of *parens patriae*, originally an English practice. According to E. Wayne Carp,

Colonial Americans copied the English poor law system when it came to caring for children born out of wedlock, orphaned, or neglected. Statutes permitted town and parish authorities to remove children from pauper families and place them with masters who, in exchange for their labor would provide them with an adequate maintenance. (6)

This practice continued well into the Gilded Age. The child savers and the government used the doctrine of *parens patriae* to remove a child from his poor family, although “the primary objective of intervention was to be the child, the instrument of this intervention was to be the parents—or, more specifically, the mother—via the family” (Parton 14). Michigan was the first state to pass legislation to empower government with the care of the orphan child. According to C. D. Randall,

In 1871 Michigan assumed guardianship, care, control, and supervision of her dependent children. Was the movement a wise one? Would the idea progress, and would other states do likewise? Would the state do better than had been done? Could a great state, dealing with the high responsibilities incident to statehood, become the parent, the guardian of children, and discharge all duties attendant as tenderly and successfully as private or sectarian charity had? These were some of the questions of the hour. Michigan and other states have answered them in the affirmative...and have given us the most humane and economical system of child-saving known. (243)

Michigan’s example was soon followed by the rest of the states, and by the end of the century almost all the states had guardianship of the orphans. Thus, gradually, orphans come under the supervision and control of the state and society.

In addition to Foucault's ideas, this study borrows Edward Said's ideas espoused in *Orientalism*. Said contends,

Because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. That is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity "the Orient" is in question. It [this book] also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even an underground self. (3)

Said documents Europe's fascination for the Orient and its people through textual evidence provided from many orientalist's works. In his opinion, orientalism as a branch of knowledge was an outcome of the West's desire to formulate an identity based on the oriental as "the other". Thus, Said believes, "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). A similar strategy is in use in postbellum writings, where the middle and upper classes project the orphans as "the other" against whom they could form an identity of their own. The orphan discourse that resulted, especially from the works of Brace and the various papers presented at the Annual Conference of Charities and Correction, created an abundance of knowledge pertaining to the orphan in an attempt to establish power over them. Said states,

Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. (6)

The orphan emerged as a complex entity suitable for study in the academy and for conferences. What resulted from this obsession was the creation of the orphan figure "so unacceptably general a level of description as not to be worth the effort, or in the second instance, into writing so detailed and atomistic a series of analyses as to lose all track of the general lines of force

informing the field, giving it its special cogency” (Said 9). This conflicting description of the orphan, general and detailed, complicates and presents orphans as a threat; hence, allowing scholars, writers, politicians, and social engineers to intervene in their lives. Control was at the center of nineteenth-century culture, more so for the orphan, bereft of any controlling power in their lives. Mary P. Ryan notes “This literature did not present moral postulates and domestic values as the opinion of community leaders... [rather] embedded them in the daily lives of the common people” (30). Thus the orphan becomes a site for establishing society’s complex hegemony.

This study examines these orphans’ lives based on the issues of race, class, and gender. These categories often intersect and coalesce to marginalize certain groups of people and making them metaphorical orphans. In such cases, their metaphorical orphanhood sublimates identity issues. The normative postbellum American was a white male belonging to either the middle or upper class. Compared to such a restrictive notion of citizenship, even adults with affiliation to the other races, class or gender qualified as metaphorical orphans as they sought more participation and inclusion. In real orphans, these categories combine to further marginalize and reduce them to the lowest social status, thereby, denying them access to privileges and opportunities available to the normative child. Such binaries in postbellum America disempower the non-normative orphans. While the normative child is hailed as the epitome of social order and morality, the non-normative orphans are seen as the opposite; hence, their exclusion is justified and rationalized. These reductive tendencies then deny basic opportunities to the non-normative child. Based on the overarching Foucault-Said framework, the three chapters are supplemented by theoretical ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, F. E.W. Du Bois, Pierre Bourdieu, Karl

Marx and Friedrich Engels, Jacques Lacan, and Hélène Cixous as relevant to the social constructs of race, class, and gender.

The first chapter, “‘I Knewed He Was White Inside’: Dialogism, Double Consciousness, and Racial Orphans,” examines the portrayal of orphans of other races in Jackson’s *Ramona* (1884), Johnson’s *Clarence and Corinth; or, God’s Ways* (1890), and Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Combining Bakhtin’s and Du Bois’s ideas, I contend that Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism in these novels complements Du Bois’s double-consciousness. Dialogism in these narratives results from the different worldviews that surface from the presence of diverse social speeches. On the other hand, double-consciousness in the racial orphan stems from the contending worldviews that define postbellum America. Borrowing Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia and dialogism and Du Bois’s premise that African Americans experienced double-consciousness after Emancipation, I identify how the writers embed divergent worldviews of orphans of race in their narratives. These worldviews animate the narratives and complicate the characterization of racial orphans. This chapter delves into the narrative depiction of orphans of other races—African Americans, Native Americans and the Irish.

The following chapter looks at orphanhood through the lens of class. Entitled “Creating Class-consciousness in the ‘Dangerous’ Foundlings of America,” the second chapter focuses on fiction and non-fiction about orphans that were produced in postbellum America and the various representations of real and metaphorical orphans belonging to different classes. Although any study on class subsumes race and gender, this chapter concentrates on a broad assessment of class among lower or working class white orphans. Assuming that the Irish dependents discussed at length in this chapter are considered white (although many scholars contend the opposite), and

contrary to my argument in the previous chapter where the Irish orphans, albeit white, were often conflated with the racial orphans, this chapter identifies some similarities in the prejudices against the Irish in fictional and non-fictional works. The fictional works discussed in this chapter mimic and reinforce widespread cultural prejudices of the lower class orphans, specifically children of Irish immigrants. This chapter relies on the following fictional works: Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1868) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1874), Alcott's *Little Women* (1869), *Little Men* (1871), *Jo's Boys* (1886), and *Eight Cousins* (1875), and some non-fictional works which include, *A Voice from the Newsboys* (1860) by John Morrow and Brace's *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (1872). In this chapter, I identify some specific markers that helped perform class in postbellum America. In conjunction with ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, this chapter borrows the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the various forms of capital— cultural, economic, social, and symbolic—and their role in making class difference visible in nineteenth-century America. I argue that the middle and the upper classes created class-consciousness to separate the lower classes by relying on the different forms of capital. Since the working class orphans lived in abject poverty, the dominating classes deploy cultural, social, and symbolic capital to exclude them.

Lastly, I look at the construction of a gendered identity in orphans. In exploring this topic, I look at the bifurcation of the orphan tale into orphan boy's story and orphan girl's story. Tracing this trend in broader changes in the American literary scene, I identify some generic traits that define the two sub-genres. Although new notions pertaining to girlhood and boyhood developed after the Civil War, a cultural anxiety of androgyny looms over the nineteenth century in general. I explore the popular terms such as tomboy and sissy that were current then and trace the history of androgyny to establish my claim. The chapter, "Maybe I Am, Maybe I Ain't":



Androgynous Orphans in Postbellum America,” analyzes Alcott’s *Little Women*, Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870), and Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Although my study encompasses race, class, and gender, these categories are often inextricable intertwined. The orphan’s harrowing plight can become further complicated if they identify with these categories. Postbellum America was rife with prejudices against people of color, of low class, and of the female gender, and an orphan possessing any of these attributes was discriminated the most. If we see all human life as part of a hierarchy, an upper class white man would be on top of the hierarchy and an African American or Native American orphan girl would be at the very bottom of that hierarchy. Such a concrete idea of social roles of different people explains not only how power is wielded, but also how that power is used as social control to further subjugate and restrict those at the bottom of the hierarchy from disturbing the social status quo. Those in power develop and manipulate social and cultural practices to hold on to their position at the top and rule over those at the bottom. Although social hierarchy is well-entrenched, looking beyond it affords us a new outlook, especially so in case of orphans, the most voiceless and marginalized, who, despite their condition, become agents of change.

**“I Knowed He Was White Inside”: Dialogism, Double-consciousness, and Racial Orphans**

A quick conception of all that this accusation meant for her nerved her with unwonted courage to deny it. “It is a lie; it is not true, I am white! Look at my hair, it is brown; and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair,” seizing his wrist. “Look at my hand; whiter than yours, Armand,” she laughed hysterically.

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“My mother, they tell me I am not white. Armand has told me I am not white. For God’s sake tell them it is not true. You must know it is not true. I shall die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy, and live.”

“Desiree’s Baby,” Kate Chopin

In Kate Chopin’s “Desiree’s Baby” (1893), Desiree’s death wish when her whiteness is questioned ironically illustrates both the value of whiteness and also its apparent arbitrariness. Desiree, possessing all the physical attributes of white people, is forced to doubt her white origins merely because her baby appears non-white. Although in the story Chopin attributes the blackness in the child to a black paternal grandparent, sexual abuse of female slaves by their white masters in southern plantations during slavery was rampant and this rendered whiteness arbitrary. Although the dominant white culture successfully elided any discussion of its own race impurity, James Baldwin succinctly notes that “white people are not white: part of the price of the white ticket is to delude themselves in believing that they are. . . . America is not, and never can be, white” (xiv).<sup>15</sup> Baldwin’s contention points toward a delusional race trying to sustain the myth of its supremacy and purity. W.E.B. Du Bois corroborates Baldwin’s claims: “The red stain

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<sup>15</sup> In the introduction of this collection of his non-fictional writing, *The Price of Ticket: Collected Non-Fiction, 1948-1985*, Baldwin discusses race and identity in America. He succinctly states that European immigrants who migrated to America all became white except for the African immigrants. Pointing at the contradiction with such a construction of race, Baldwin reveals the inconsistencies in white consciousness regarding race.

of bastardy, which two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women had stamped upon his race, meant not only the loss of ancient African chastity, but also the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers, threatening almost the obliteration of the Negro home” (12). While Du Bois’s fears are well-placed, its obverse—the fear of the annihilation of the white race— finds a voice in nineteenth-century American fiction. A heightened awareness of racial difference characterized postbellum America. Asian Americans (comprising mostly the Chinese railroad workers) and Irish immigrants joined the ranks of African Americans and Native Americans as America’s “other” races. Although whiteness was hegemonic in nineteenth-century America, mass immigration from Europe made it circumspect. Racial exclusion in America has and continues to animate its history. In such a culture of racial exclusion, the position of orphans, always already excluded from any society, becomes even more complicated and distraught. Orphans of color experienced a peculiar double-consciousness at a time fraught with race anxiety, which Du Bois theorized as “a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (9). These orphans were forced to look at themselves through the eyes of others as they grappled with double-consciousness. Similarly, this double-consciousness becomes more complicated and problematic for mixed-race orphans, who are doubly orphaned, both on account of their liminal position vis-a-vis race and their actual orphan condition. Although literary representations of the racial orphan’s double-consciousness borrows the same hegemonic language that was used to undermine their status in the postbellum, some writers rely on the inherent dialogism of that language that “set[s] into motion a process of active, mutual cause-and-effect and interillumination”<sup>16</sup> (*Dialogic*

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<sup>16</sup> According to Bakhtin, heteroglossia, or the presence of a diversity of speech types in

*Imagination* 12), to provide readers a “sense of opposition and struggle at the heart of existence...and in the specificity of individual consciousness” (*Dialogic Imagination* xviii). Combining the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin and Du Bois, this chapter explores this topic through literary analyses of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* (1884), Mrs. Amelia E. Johnson’s *Clarence and Corinth; or, God’s Ways* (1890), and Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

Race anxiety spurred the white race to segregate American society. Reeling under white hegemony, the other races face hardship, persecution, discrimination, and ‘double-consciousness’. Although Du Bois’s term ‘double-consciousness’ or ‘two-ness,’ is commonly applied to the black man’s dilemma of possessing two souls, American and black, the idea can be extended to the other races that were excluded from the mainstream, like the Native Americans, the newly arrived white Irish immigrants, and Asian Americans.<sup>17</sup> The plight of orphans of these races, “always already” excluded from society, is especially poignant. The “double-consciousness” experienced by these orphans of color highlights the deep rift in nineteenth-century America. Under the façade of integrating and assimilating orphans of other races, advocates of white racial superiority limited the resources and opportunities for racial orphans. As a result, the racial orphan “ever feels his[/her] twoness,—an American, a Negro [or a native

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any human utterance points at the presence of multiple worldviews that shape every consciousness. Similarly, the presence of these diverse speech types through different characters and also in the utterances of individual characters in a novel elicits the presence of multiple worldviews, both dominant and subservient. Bakhtin’s heteroglossia is similar to Du Bois’s double-consciousness as both point at a struggle and the presence of oppositional worldviews within an individual and the literary product of a writer.

<sup>17</sup> In her chapters entitled “The Negro as Ultimate Orphan” and “Tales of Captivity and Adoption,” Diana Pazicky contends that citizenship in the new republic necessitated the scapegoating of people of different racial, religious, and ethnic groups. Indians, blacks, and the newly arriving immigrants from Ireland became the ‘cultural’ or metaphorical orphans of the land.

Indian, or an Irish ]; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one [...] body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois 9). In addition to contending with double-consciousness, these orphans hope for a self-consciousness “without being cursed and spit upon by [their] fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in [their] face” (9). Faced with such circumstances, the best opportunity these orphans have is through

the ideal of “book-learning”; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life. (Du Bois 11-12)

Education, denied to most slaves in the antebellum, becomes the main thrust for the free slaves of the postbellum. While children under parental care and supervision could avail that opportunity easily, it was orphans, especially these excluded orphans of the “other” races, whose abject condition made education unattainable; hence, a strong desire to acquire it as an escape from their present condition.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin presents his understanding of the novel in the nineteenth century. Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogic imagination is embodied in his notion of heteroglossia, which is pertinent to an understanding of Du Bois’s double-consciousness. Implicit in Du Bois’s notion of double-consciousness is the presence of dueling consciousnesses within a black person, one consciousness based on their actual lived experience and circumstances and the other based on the desire for the life lived by the privileged whites. Both consciousnesses highlight “the sense of opposition and struggle at the very heart of [American] existence” (*Dialogic Imagination* xviii). Double-consciousness is inherently dialogic. Similarly, Bakhtin’s heteroglossia implies the presence of a diversity of speech sounds, an aspect present in

all languages spoken in the world. The presence of diverse speech sounds within any language points to the diversity of human existence. The constant interaction of these diverse speech sounds in everyday life promotes dialogism. Of all the literary forms, the novel is unique in its ability to deploy dialogism by embodying narrative heteroglossia which offers readers multiple worldviews within the literary world the writer creates. While double-consciousness in a character is depicted through self-questionings and the presence of two warring souls, the outcome of different worldviews, heteroglossia— its literary equivalent—is deployed in the narrative to provide readers the diverse worldviews that exist and clash within the literary world created by writers. These diverse speech sounds are in constant dialogue with one another, providing readers with the different worldviews prevalent at a particular era and also redolent of the specific experiences of people that shape those worldviews. Bakhtin believes that the novel is the most dialogic genre because it “is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process” (*Dialogic Imagination* 7). The novel, often considered a bastard, a low-genre, makes itself prominent by calling attention to itself and also to the other genres by flouting the strict norms of language, diction, style, and form of these earlier rigid genres. The novel’s amphibious nature makes it a unique genre, and in flouting the norms of literary tradition, “The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure; re-formulating and re-accentuating them” (*Dialogic Imagination* 5). Bakhtin’s high regard for the novel is based on heteroglossia, or the novel’s ability to parody earlier novels. He believes that through this continuous parodying of earlier novels, the novel keeps renewing and improving

itself, thus reflecting the contesting world views of the age it represents more effectively. In addition to dialogism, the double-consciousness experienced by the orphans in all three novels under purview in this chapter embodies some aspect of Bakhtin's heteroglossia. Johnson's *Clarence and Corinne* and Jackson's *Ramona* borrow and rewrite the discourse of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*,<sup>18</sup> which relies on romantic racism and moral suasion to move its white readers. Since "discourse is by its very nature dialogic" (Dostoevsky 183), Bakhtin opines that the practice of "appropriating another's discourse" could reveal a "whole spectrum of possible relationships" with that discourse (*Dialogic Imagination* 69), from its reverent use to a parody (*Dialogic Imagination* 70). By appropriating Stowe and the discourse of the mid-century sentimental women writers, *Ramona* and *Clarence and Corinne* reverently mimic Stowe's discourse of racial uplift and also offer its subtle parody. In rewriting the discourse, both Johnson and Jackson engage Stowe's popular novel in a different time in new ways. Literary heteroglossia enables Johnson and Jackson to present a whole spectrum of worldviews about the racial orphans—from the dominant white worldview, which occludes racial orphans from civil society, to those who sympathize and encourage them. On the other hand, Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, although parodying the bad boy genre, also reassesses race relations in the new era, thus, engaging in the same discourse initiated by Stowe, albeit through subversion, since the bad boy genre was a result of a movement away from the overly sentimental discourse Stowe popularized. In addition to the double-consciousness experienced by the orphans in these novels,

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<sup>18</sup> Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was phenomenally successful among its contemporary readers. It shaped the sentimental/domestic discourse that continued to be produced by women until the fin de siècle. I use Stowe as a representative of the women's writing that was very popular in the century. In her article, "Topsy and Topsy-Turvy Jo: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and/in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*," Michelle Abate points out the huge influence of Stowe. According to Abate, Alcott considered it among her favorite books (60) and was inspired by it.

all three writers rely on the novel as a genre and the dialogism present in these works makes race relations even more tenuous as they “interilluminate” the dueling worldviews of postbellum America.

Racism has always been around in the world in some form or another. The impulse to denigrate another based on some aspect of their appearance continues to thrive. The Judeo-Christian tradition tried to justify racism through a revision of the Curse of Ham. Although scholars disagree about the actual meaning of Noah’s curse on Ham, according to Werner Sollors, Christians, Jews, and later Muslims interpreted the curse to justify slavery.<sup>19</sup> In the New World, the curse was used in concert with secular pseudo-scientific claims of scientific racism to endorse the subjection of blacks.<sup>20</sup> While the struggle between the different races can be traced back to the birth of America, the one constant in this evolving history of race in America has been the dominance of the white race which successfully consolidated its position in relation to the “other” races in America’s changing demographics. The original inhabitants of the land, the native Indians, became the first victims. Dubbed an inferior race, they suffered persecution in the hands of the new settlers, some of whom were themselves victims of persecution in Europe. The advent of the settlers, brandishing modern artillery, became a bane for the native Indians. Failing to stop these settlers, the native Indian population moved into the interiors of America, where they faced starvation and death. The native Indians continue to struggle even in twenty-first century America. In their daily lives, their interaction with the whites was limited when

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<sup>19</sup> In *Neither Black Nor White*, Sollors traces the prejudice against skin color to the earliest times. He looks at ancient practices and how they impacted modern notions of race, p78-111.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* 113



compared to that of the slaves, who were brought to America to serve the whites. Native Indians lived mostly in relative isolation from the rest of the country in the nineteenth century.

Although the institution of slavery was integral to the European colonial mission, American slavery has remained its most potent manifestation. Scientific racism became a useful tool in the New World as it was used to justify slavery in America. Organized efficiently under the aegis of Southern plantations, American slave holders turned slavery into a profitable capitalist venture: it dehumanized the slaves and used them as property, bought and sold slaves in auctions, bred slaves through sexual abuse of female slaves, separated slave families, denied access to literacy and other basic rights, etc. The institution thrived as laws upholding individual freedom and liberty were manipulated to apply strictly to the white race. Partly due to its representation in literature and culture, and partly due its conflict with the very essence of America's foundation on the principle of liberty and freedom for all, slavery remained a contentious issue between the Northern and Southern states in America; finally being abolished after the American Civil War (1861-1865). Although Emancipation raised hopes of a better life for the slaves, it did not bring much relief as the erstwhile slaves continued to face segregation and discrimination in every sphere of life.

Postbellum America, a veritable cauldron of different races, offered the ruling white race a plethora of race myths to establish its supposed racial superiority. Some postbellum literary texts condone and reinforce racism through a variety of literary practices: narrative gaps and silences, propagating comforting racial myths and stereotypes of the racial other, character portrayals that confirm the inferiority of the racial other and uphold the superiority of whites, etc. While the segregation of the non-whites from the mainstream was based solely on skin color, American society grappled with the different hues of white immigrants pouring into its borders;

hence, a reassessment and redefinition of whiteness was undertaken. A new understanding of whiteness which did not rely solely on skin color became current. Whiteness began to denote a combination of whiteness, legitimate white lineage, economic prosperity, class, property, and good character, defined in strict Christian Protestant terms. Such a redefinition manipulated whiteness to exclude the indigent Irish catholic immigrants, but included the educated German Protestants. According to Peter Kolchin, this “variegated whiteness”<sup>21</sup> began to exclude those who were supposedly white. Kolchin charts the trajectory of the changing meaning of whiteness in the nineteenth century and attributes it to change in demographics:

From the 1790s to the 1840s, in an era of relatively few immigrants, Americans saw people as either white or black. Between the 1840s and the 1920s, a period of massive foreign immigration and pervasive prejudice against various immigrant groups, there emerged a pattern of “variegated whiteness” in which some groups appeared better-whiter-than others. (156)

The Irish immigrants’ position, especially in the postbellum, was problematic for the bourgeois white because their presence questioned racial hierarchy of whites in American society; hence, their exclusion was sought with much urgency. As the number of people being excluded under the newly categorized racial politics of the bourgeois white increased, such attempts were met with opposition from those excluded. The absence of Native Indians, African Americans, and Chinese from postbellum literary works and the denunciation of Irish Catholics (especially in Alcott’s works) reflect American society’s growing distrust and disregard for the “other”. In the social realm, the ruling white majority expressed a preference for African Americans over the Irish, hence instilling in the blacks hope of a slightly elevated social position. Literary silence

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<sup>21</sup> According to his own admission, Kolchin attempts to write “a tentative progress report on a literature still very much in evolution” (155) on whiteness studies. He delves into two seminal works on whiteness and enables readers to trace how whiteness studies relied on some common assumptions on race and the changes within the field in recent times. These changes are in concert with this growing understanding of race as a social construct rather than an actual difference, p.154-173.

pertaining to Native Americans and Asian Americans is understandable in view of their limited social interaction with whites when compared to the African Americans or the newly arrived Irish immigrants. Literature of the period often pitted African Americans and Irish immigrants against each other in a veritable struggle for survival when in reality

a 5 to 1 ratio of foreign-born “whites” to African Americans competing with the Irish immigrants for jobs [was the case]. In the most critical socio-political category, laborers, there were four times as many non-Irish foreign-born “whites,” European-Americans, in the labor market as there were African-Americans. (Allen 193-194).

In Alcott’s *Work* (1872), the narrator sympathizes with African American servants, who refuse to work with Irish servants in the same household, by referring to the white Irish as “incapable” (Ingle 152).<sup>22</sup> By favoring African Americans, the upper class white Americans retained exclusive servitude for the blacks as racial difference and racial tutelage<sup>23</sup> simplified the master slave equation.

Anglo-Saxon prejudice of the Irish dates back to the ninth century. In Ireland, centuries of religio-racial oppression of the Irish by the English resulted in marginalizing the Irish. Ireland’s economy was affected by England’s legislations and policies against Irish people. Since the ninth century, Ireland has suffered English assaults to their land and culture. As opposed to the English, the Irish were portrayed in England as primitive and less civilized. Numerous literary and historical accounts produced in England since the ninth century continued to present

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<sup>22</sup> Ingle offers Alcott’s example to prove her point that prejudices against the Irish were quite widespread.

<sup>23</sup> Cathy Boeckman’s *A Question of Character* gives us insight into how character played an important role in determining the worth of a race. She notes that through racial tutelage, which often was subtly rendered through novels like Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the superiority of the whites was upheld and the inferiority of the blacks were reinforced. She also explores the different tools that were used by whites to further subjugate the blacks after Emancipation, p. 44-45.

the Irish as racially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon.<sup>24</sup> England thus created a “socio-genic theory of racial oppression” (Allen 46) that enabled the English to continue its oppression of the Irish. In defining the Irish as socially inferior to the English, these writers also attempted to define themselves or more specifically Anglo-Saxon. As Vincent J. Cheng points out,

After all, the very activities and characteristics which the Self would expel and represent as primitive and Other in fact shape the Self’s own culture and constitution. What is occluded is not only the actual heterogeneous specificities of different cultures, but also the presence of the other within the self, the willingness to acknowledge that not only does the other-within shape the self, but that in very real ways it *is* the self. What is denied is an awareness of the fluid and reciprocal nature of influence and cultural formation in which the self both acts and is acted. [emphasis in original] (55)

Cheng makes it explicit that the self projects its own inadequacies and flaws in shaping the other as primitive. Some part of the self participates and exists in the other that is created as a foil for the self.<sup>25</sup> Hence, denial of racial and cultural admixture in spite of centuries of political, social and cultural interaction is subsumed in the Anglo-Saxon’s desire to project racial purity. In the New World, the age-old rivalry is renewed but takes a slightly different turn. During the years leading on to the Civil War, as scores of Irish cross the ocean and travel to America and settle in the North, they suffer the same humiliation which they experienced at home but the oppression also brings hope of becoming part of the white race. The Irish work toward that goal.

The advent of the Irish in America forces a reevaluation of racial categories. Relying on the age-old Anglo-Saxon prejudice of the Irish, whiteness advocates aligned whiteness with property and class. The stereotypes of the Irish resurfaced despite the reality of the Irish

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<sup>24</sup> Edmund Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland* propagates many stereotypes of the Irish. In order to justify English rule in Ireland, Spenser’s treatise advocates different strategies the English could adopt.

<sup>25</sup> Cheng’s central premise that in order for the self to create an identity for itself, the self needs to see itself in relation and in opposition to the other; this other then helps the self to create an identity as different from the other. This idea is the central tenet of Said’s *Orientalism*, although Said uses it in connection with the West and the Orient.

immigrants. Although these Anglo-Saxon prejudices surrounding the Irish pointed to their inferior position as menials and farm laborers, most of those fleeing starvation in the face of the Irish Potato Famine did not constitute a homogeneous group of indigent farmers. Although Irish immigration to America dates back roughly to the sixteenth century, the numbers increased after the infamous Irish Potato Famine (1845-49). According to Mary C. Waters, “From 1815 to the Famine, between 800,000 and one million Irish—about twice the total for the previous two centuries—sailed for North America. Contrary to the popular stereotypes, not all were poor, not all were Catholic, and not even all spoke English” (38). Between 1845 and 1889, the number of Irish immigrants tripled to approximately three million (Foner 6). Although a vast majority of these immigrants, “Especially during the famine decade of 1845-1855 ... were extremely impoverished and poorly educated” (Ingle 151), even then, these immigrants were not all poor and illiterate and neither were they all Irish (but scot-Irish), contrary to the popular myths and stereotypes about them that circulated in postbellum America. In spite of the reality of the Irish immigrants, prejudice against them was widespread, especially after the Civil War. Their whiteness seemed inconsequential in a country where the color divide was so entrenched and their economic condition aligned them with the free slaves. Historically, racial oppression of the blacks in America and the Irish in Ireland by English settlers coincided and the Irish sympathized with the plight of the African Americans, but the Irish immigrants arriving in America mobilized and participated in the racial oppression of the blacks in the hope of gaining acceptance as white.<sup>26</sup> In spite of such hopes, the plight of the Irish in the North resembled the plight of the

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<sup>26</sup> In *The Invention of the White Race*, Theodore W. Allen charts the history of how the white race was invented in America. In an exhaustive study spanning two volumes, he elaborates on the arrival of Irish Immigrants and the growing prejudices against them in their adopted country. In the ensuing struggle for recognition, Irish whites saw blacks as their antagonists and mobilized against Abolition and their freedom.

emancipated slaves in the South. Race and economic condition coalesced to oppress the blacks, the Irish, and the native Indian in postbellum America, but Euro-American writers struggled to maintain the conflation of whiteness and propertied class in America.

The prejudice and treatment meted out to the white low class Irish immigrants did not escape the attention of blacks; who were busy rebuilding their lives after the Civil War. The desire to uplift the race was felt and many prominent African American leaders engaged in social activism. Following the footsteps of their white sisters, in particular the example set by Stowe, there was a “vigorous activity among black women writer’s club during the decade of the 1890s” (Tate 4). This club borrowed heavily from their mid-century white sisters and produced domestic fiction that blurred racial markers and stressed on character<sup>27</sup>— a Protestant Christian character. By writing themselves into a very popular white women’s genre, these black women question notions of white exclusiveness, deny accusations of inherent black retrogression, and dismiss the racially polarized society by replacing it with a raceless one. By rewriting the black race in a new time, these works engage in a dialogue and enter into a dialogic relationship with the antebellum white women’s domestic fiction “between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other” (*Dialogic Imagination* 76). This double-voiced discourse of these black women writers is further accentuated by the orphan central character’s double-consciousness. In an attempt to be acknowledged, the orphan characters in these novels embody the double-consciousness espoused by Du Bois, in which the black women writers’ express a

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<sup>27</sup> Boeckman mentions that the notion of character that developed in nineteenth-century America relied on a narrow definition of character that is middle-class, white, and Protestant, p. 44. She also notes that African American women writers borrowed from their antebellum white sisters. On the other hand, Abate discusses Toni Morrison’s claim in *Playing in the Dark* that white writers in general, and writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Ernest Hemingway, and some others, filtered their narratives through a distinctly black consciousness, which Morrison terms “American Africanism” (Abate 61).

“longing to attain self-conscious [wo/]manhood, to merge his [/her] double self into a better and truer self. In this merging [s/]he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost” (9). These turn of the century women writers see an opportunity for inclusion in the ongoing redefinition of whiteness in America.

As these changes were very subtly being introduced in the American consciousness, African Americans, hitherto excluded, appropriated and manipulated such color categories by erasing dependence on skin color and privileging character. Such a reconfiguration of racial categories, both within the white and black communities, suggests the fluidity of race in postbellum America and points to its easy manipulation, both by the whites and blacks. While the manipulation of whiteness was aimed at excluding white Irish immigrants, Blackness advocates erase blackness or any marker of skin color to render skin color meaningless. Similar racial negotiations characterize postbellum America and further accentuate the racial divide and exclusion of both the white Irish immigrants and blacks, thereby pitting them against one another and creating postbellum’s easy scapegoats.

The Reconstruction era was especially notable for the sudden increase in the number of orphans. Orphans of all races increased as a result of diseases, ravages of war, and displacement. The increase in the number of orphans facilitated their easy manipulation by society. While some aspects of these orphan’s lives were praiseworthy, there were other aspects that were constantly under scrutiny. The African American female writers narrate the condition of orphan black lives by obliterating race in an effort to be taken seriously and to transcend segregated publishing houses which catered to a middle class white reading public. In spite of their attempt to mimic the genre conventions of a predominantly white literature, these books fail to garner readership.

The reception of the books seems quite apparent from the fact that Henry Louis Gates, Jr., managed to extricate these books from anonymity in 1982, approximately a century after their publication. Until then, nineteenth-century American literary canon mostly comprised white male writers with a handful of white women writers. It was assumed by most literary scholars that African American writing in the Reconstruction era was negligible. In 1981, Gates led a team of three Cornell University professors and embarked on the Black Periodical Fiction Project to recover any black writing in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This project later became known as the Schomburg Project and resulted in the pioneering *Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers* (1988), which introduced many black women writers whose works remained unknown to the world. According to a review of the book, “the fiction project has uncovered more than 12,500 works of fiction (including 150 serialized novels), 28,200 poems, and 45,000 book reviews and notices; almost 40 percent of which are by black women” (Tabor). Gates’s rediscovery of these women writers, who produced more than African American men in this era, is considered groundbreaking. Some notable works he rediscovered were Harriet Wilson’s *Our Nig* (1859), Emma D. Kelley’s *Megda* (1895),<sup>28</sup> Johnson’s *Clarence and Corinne* and *The Hazeley Family* (1894), and Pauline Hopkin’s *Contending Forces* (1900).

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<sup>28</sup> Gates included *Megda* in his collection assuming that Kelley was an African American, which was later refuted by Holly Jackson in her article, “Identifying Emma Dunham Kelley: Rethinking Race and Authorship.” Looking at census documents she established the real identity of Kelley as a white woman.



The most striking aspect of these rediscovered works was race erasure<sup>29</sup> or a narrative silence on their protagonists' skin color throughout these works. By erasing race from their orphan stories, these writers challenge and silence white hegemony, and present the African American orphan experience in the Reconstruction as comparable to white orphan experience. As African American male leaders and activists devoted themselves to improving the condition of their race, some prominent women took on the responsibility of writing creatively, obliterating race from their narratives, to present the blacks in a new light to mostly white readers. African American women's writing broached issues of racial discrimination and apathy towards blacks by borrowing the notion of 'character' and placing impetus on it, rather than skin color, thus subverting native white aspirations of maintaining status quo by presenting white characters as having superior character in most works, especially *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. These turn of the century African American women writers emancipate blackness from the restrictions of skin color by performing whiteness. Through the raceless characters of their novels these writers thwart racist categories and call attention to the fluidity of race identity. Race erasure enables the African American orphans in these novels to transcend their limiting lives and to seek opportunity in the new republic. Among these women writers, Mrs. Amelia E. Johnson's work *Clarence and Corinne; or, God's Ways* helps us understand the struggle African Americans faced while negotiating their race identity in the postbellum. In addition to economic hardship, the emancipated blacks continued to face discrimination and segregation in public life across America. Since "nineteenth-century America associated whiteness with such traits as civility, decorum, and self-control, and blackness with the characteristics of unruliness, impulsiveness,

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<sup>29</sup> These pioneering black women writers used race erasure as an important tool to undermine race and emphasize the character of the New Negro and thereby, gain recognition for blacks.

and excess” (Abate 62), African American activists tried to improve the condition of the black race by emphasizing on education and projecting the idea of a “New Negro,” who was educated and civilized; someone who dispels the crystallized cultural stereotypes of African Americans that proliferated. Before Emancipation, most African American writing was devoted to chronicling the experience of slavery, hence, a plethora of slave narratives were written. In Postbellum America, African American women writers wrote orphan tales. In the infancy of African American writing in America, these women writers become literary predecessors of later writers like Charles Chestnutt, Nella Larson, and Zora Neale Hurston by foregrounding the themes of race identity, passing, and miscegenation. Race erasure of their protagonists illustrates a desire to question society’s inscribed code on racial boundaries and their limitations in social interaction. Their race erasure counteracts racial tutelage by embodying the concept of passing and overturning “the conventions of literature, not just its themes, [which] help to create race and to make it visible” (Boeckman 9).

As if to acknowledge the literary debt to their white female predecessors, these African American women writers deploy intertextuality in their works. In doing so, they write themselves into the American literary tradition. Looking at Emancipation as an epoch in African American life, they write African American culture into American literary history, thereby seeking to participate in building an African American community and culture as distinct yet similar to white culture. Nineteenth-century literature in general seemed to be preoccupied with character as “Literature was assumed to be the best location for the representation of national and racial character, and the debates over the relative merits of sentimental, romantic, and realist fiction were embroiled in discussions of which mode offered the best form of characterization” (Boeckman 5). Furthermore, this notion of character almost always relied on portraying white

characters; on rare instances when black characters were drawn, they were almost always stock characters. Boeckman points out the contradiction inherent in using character to create racial divide when she suggests “Character is the bottom line in discussions of race, but since character can be imitated, it is unclear how the concept can be used as a solid basis for racial policy” (44). The astute black women writers identify the white writers’ reliance on character to disenfranchise the emancipated slaves; they borrow and use it in their narratives to empower the black community. They envision and appropriate a very white middle-class sense of life and community, considered the epitome of success. Although they relied on the hackneyed trope of intrepid orphans overcoming all adversaries to improve their life’s condition, the African American orphan’s struggle is even more daunting than the stories of the white women writers because of race; however, by erasing any mention of race in their stories, they simultaneously appeal to white readership and also discredit race as a signifier of social difference. Hence, race erasure in these narratives serves the dual purpose of reaching out to white readers and also to subvert and dismiss white society’s imposition of racial difference after Emancipation as fatuous.

Intertextuality in these works works in a two-fold manner. While the imitation of the narrative style of mid-century white women’s domestic fiction is evident, it is supplemented by a conscious borrowing of ideas from each other. These writers form a sisterhood of sorts. Aware of the main purpose of their writing as literary activism, they create a tradition of African American writing which responds to the exigencies of Emancipation. The Antebellum created slave narratives; the postbellum requires a rite of passage or coming of age narrative, which would usher the orphan into the normative middle-class life, and through the orphan’s narrative, African Americans, the metaphorical orphans, would chart a similar trajectory for their community. Stressing the role of intertextuality in these writer’s works, Gates notes that

writers read other writers and ground their representations...in models of language provided largely by other writers to whom they feel akin. It is through this mode of literary revision, evident in the texts themselves—in formal echoes, recast metaphors, even in parody—that a ‘tradition emerges and defines itself. (qtd in Foreman 10).

In *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Gabrielle P. Foreman refers to these writers’ borrowing of ideas from one another as simultextuality, which “often produce multivalent meanings that, rather than being subtextually buried beneath a principally reformist message of affective and emotional connection, are [...] simultextually available at the primary level of narrative interpretation” (6). Foreman further adds that, “simultexts exhibit their multivalent meanings on the surface for those who can access and then interpret them in accordance with collective and literary concerns” (7). Foreman’s simultextuality is dialogic in nature as Bakhtin points out,

Every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is more or less dialogized. This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between styles of language. But it is not a dialogue in the narrative sense, nor in the abstract sense; rather it is a dialogue between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other. (*Dialogic Imagination* 76)

Foreman’s elaboration on simultextuality relies on the presence of multivalent meanings on the surface, which presupposes dialogism. Heteroglossia imparts dialogism to any narrative, and a dialogic discourse results in multivalent meanings or different points of view.

In writing *Clarence and Corinne, Or God’s Way*, Johnson contributes to the New Negro project in the tradition of romantic racism exemplified by Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Imitating Stowe, she implicates blacks as inferior to whites, and she also lends credence to their ability to transcend their social condition. *Clarence and Corinne* illustrates ambivalence toward race akin to the culture in general. This ambivalence is the result of race tutelage and an inherent double-consciousness in the writer’s personality which finds an outlet in her literary expression. Johnson situates in her narrative both the white point of view of blacks and a revisionary black point of

view, engaging in a dialogic relationship between the different world views pertaining to race. Before she deploys race erasure in her novel, Johnson presents white accusations of black retrogression in her portrayal of Mr. and Mrs. Burton. Their portrayal reinforces stereotypes of blacks: “The father, rough, uncouth, and almost always under the influence of liquor. The mother, careless and unkempt” (19). Johnson validates black retrogression through their portrayal in an attempt to appeal to white readers to endorse the New Negro project. Only by denouncing the blacks of antebellum days could the New Negro be redeemed before postbellum white readers. In portraying Clarence and Corinne, Johnson appeals to her readers to overlook the retrogression in the past generations in favor of the new generation of blacks who were not only good Christians, but were educated and making valuable contributions to American society. Johnson’s double-consciousness of the various myths surrounding her race coupled with the desire to be acknowledged as civilized members of American society is the reason for the conflicting portrayal of the Burton family. In contrast to the parents, Johnson points out the innate goodness in the new generation of Burtons: “Clarence, rugged and impetuous, but thoroughly good-natured. Corinne both looked and was different from these, and had always been so” (19). The dialogism in the narrative is supplemented by Johnson’s own double-consciousness, an outcome of her race-consciousness, which is exemplified in the narrative through her conscious blurring of Clarence and Corinne’s racial features: “...a boy of twelve years entered, followed by a little girl of nine. They were both attractive children, notwithstanding the fact that they bore in their appearance and faces the stamp of neglect and scanty fare” (7). Although they had black eyes, neither their skin color is mentioned, nor does she use vernacular English for readers to be able to ascertain their race. As Hortense J. Spillers remarks in his introduction to Johnson’s novel:

Nothing, therefore, earmarks this work specifically as one written by a “black woman writer,” or an “Afro-American,” and except for confirming biographical information on the author, there is little or no evidence in the novel itself to suggest that Johnson wrote according to the putative urgencies of coeval black life in the United States. To that extent, the historic milieu of late nineteenth-century social reform, in which this narrative is situated, overwhelms the problems of race, at least in this particular instance. The reasons, however, why the narrative is packaged in the wrappings of ethnic neutrality and does not address any of the explicit and implied urgencies released by the failures of Reconstruction politics for African-Americans are neither overly complicated nor far to seek. (“Introduction” xxvii-xxviii)

While she evidently avoids mentioning racial attributes with the purpose of presenting black youth as promising, Johnson focusses on presenting them merely as distraught orphans in need of help. Hence, Johnson ensures that Clarence and Corinne “pass” as white in their characterization, thereby divorcing them from their race. Only by denying their racial identity would it be possible for the young Burtons to escape society’s scrutiny and enable them to transform their lives, as Foreman rightly points out that

racial construction as incarnated in the “raceless” body’s transformational ability has a wide range of expressive possibilities that reach beyond conventional texts in which phenotypically white-skinned but juridically Black characters pass. As we know, more complex and challenging racial signification is often at work in these instances. (17)

Johnson’s astute understanding of racial categories and their limitations in America results in her creation of “raceless” bodies. Only through their “raceless” bodies can black orphans hope to be considered significant in postbellum America. Mired in Johnson’s deliberate attempt to erase race is an acute awareness of its significance in society, thereby, making literary endeavor inherently dialogic.

Both Johnson and her husband, Harvey Johnson, were very prominent activists working for the uplift and improvement of black lives (Foreman 143).<sup>30</sup> Her real life is imitated in her art as her novel champions activism. Dr. Barrett and Miss. Helen Gray are some of the characters in

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<sup>30</sup> Foreman provides biographical information on the couple and all their contributions to the community.

the novel who participate in social activism by helping the newly orphaned siblings. In addition to Johnson's own double-consciousness, that of the orphaned siblings' is deployed in the narrative from the beginning. The following exchange between Clarence and his mother regarding his condition illustrates his desire to perform whiteness by dressing decently and also points at his dismay at the clothes he wore:

“Oh, how I wish we could dress decently, and go to school again like other children!” The mother roused herself from her apathy and looked at him, half curiously, half sadly. “What now, Clarence? What’s the good of wishing for what can’t be?” she said, wearily. “But why can’t it be? It drives me just wild to see the boys coming from school, and to know that they have been learning, while we’re just running around every day; and I’m getting so big too. Now, there’s Tom and Lizzie Greene; we met them to-day going to school, looking decent and clean, and, of course, Mr. Tom had to holler ‘ragamuffin’ at me; but I didn’t give it to him, did I?” And the boy chuckled with satisfaction at the way he had served his tormentor. (7-8)

Clarence expresses his misgivings about his material condition and his desire to go to school in a manner that illustrates the double-consciousness Du Bois characterized as part of African American identity. In spite of Johnson's portrayal of racially indeterminate orphans, she gives readers important cues to identify the orphans as black. Johnson's depiction of their mother as a heathen to some extent puts that question to rest. Since the days of slavery, blacks (and also Native Americans) have been known to practice multiple religious traditions and practices, considered arcane and viewed with suspicion by the whites. White Christian missionaries continued to assimilate them into Christianity, and often cited the lack of Christian faith as their main disqualification. Johnson's novel proves the various prejudices American society had of the heathen. Johnson's omniscient narrator places blame on the mother's lack of proper faith for the family's trouble:

She had given way altogether to despondency, and had lost all energy and ambition, doing hardly anything, save to sit and brood bitterly and rebelliously over the fate that had shut out from her the light of happiness. Had Mrs. Burton been a Christian she would not have done so, but would have sought to rear her boy and girl properly, and would

have striven to accept her lot at least cheerfully. But she was not a Christian, and, therefore, lived as one without hope. She had been born and reared in the country, but had been early deprived of her parents. (42-43)

The narrative exigency demands the death of the heathen mother because only through her death, would the orphaned children hope to be redeemed in the eyes of American society. Hence, an important aspect of Clarence and Corinne's assimilation to American society lies in their conversion to Christianity. Their mother's heathen status further complicates the double-consciousness the orphaned siblings experience in addition to their race identity. The conversation between Miss. Gray and the children at the beginning stresses the race paradox the siblings encountered:

“Won't your mother let you come?”

“Don't know as she'd care, but we ain't going anywhere to be called names, we ain't.”  
And the old hard look came again into the boy's eyes, and he picked up his basket, and was moving away unceremoniously. (11)

Although Clarence seems to have quite an ego, he becomes aware of the importance of education very early in life. When Clarence started to work for Dr. Barrett, who

seeing that the boy was ambitious to make something of himself, sympathized with him and gave him some old books, which he found stowed away in a corner of his bookcase. These books the boy studied carefully during leisure moments, with occasionally a little help from the doctor. He had told Corinne that he meant to make a man of himself, and also that his fixed determination was to make a home for her; and when he had pictured to her that home, and the many comforts it was to contain, she had been too happy to do anything but clasp her hands and say, “Oh, Clarence!” ” (49)

Being aware of his circumstances, Clarence takes advantage of the minimal resources that are made available to him. Concurrent with his desire “to make a man of himself” is an acute awareness of the many disqualifications he possessed. Du Bois makes the African American's hardship apparent when he writes,

He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance,— not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the



humanities; the accumulated sloth and shirking and awkwardness of decades and centuries shackled his hands and feet. (12)

Clarence's situation in the novel illustrates the situation not only of orphans in America, but points more poignantly at the abject conditions of the black orphan, whose hardship was at "the very bottom of hardships".

Johnson showers praise on both the siblings throughout the novel. She points out that, "He was poor, wretchedly poor and forlorn, but he was proud" (21), and that "Clarence was not an idle boy by nature, and he had tried to get work, and did work when he could get it to do; but with all his poverty he was very proud, and could not brook the sneers and taunts of those with whom he came in contact; so he was not very fortunate in finding employment" (24). Johnson stresses that Clarence was "a steady, independent sort of boy" (34). Although Johnson keeps their race identity out of her narrative, Clarence's mental wrangling points to a disturbed mind: "Oh, what a crowd of conflicting thoughts were whirling through his brain! His head ached with their pressure" (116). In spite of being honest, hardworking, and amiable, ("he had the same chance to succeed now than any other respectable, ambitious boy had, and this made him feel particularly hopeful" (78)), Clarence faces many adversities: "Alone again! Forsaken again! Despised again! What's the good of trying to do or be anything? I was born to be downtrodden—crushed!" (116). His sister, Corrinne, too undergoes hardship and almost dies from overwork. Both of them possess the pluck and courage that characterizes orphans, but their situation is particularly sad, as Clarence articulates: "Yes; drive me away from here. I'm a poor dog, and haven't even a right to rest on a doorstep! I wonder if there's a corner in the world where I may lay down and die" (117). Summing up all his attempts to improve his condition, Clarence writes: "I never could be content to be a vagabond and a good-for-nothing, but there's no chance for me, no matter how much I want to do right and be somebody; there's always

something that comes and crushes me down; and now I'm entirely discouraged" (117). Although Johnson makes the orphan siblings undergo every possible hardship and obstacle any orphan could experience, she also inhabits her novel with characters who genuinely wish to help the orphans. Even though some of these people are themselves powerless or unable to help the orphans beyond a certain point, the narrative instills hope in the readers through the inclusion of Christian ideals, which will ultimately make all the suffering and hardship bearable for the orphans. Preaching the right Christian way as the only retreat, Johnson's narrative paves a righteous path for the heathen's orphaned children. While Johnson's novel was aimed at white readers, for whom she wished to redeem black people, she also aimed her novel at the limited black readership with the aim of educating them about the benefits of leading their lives in the path of God, as the subtitle of the novel (*Or God's Way*) makes evident.

While Du Bois's double-consciousness is expressed through characterization, Bakhtin's heteroglossia is evident in the diversity of speeches Johnson incorporates in her novel. In addition to Johnson's own understanding and acknowledgement of the different points of view on race at the time and the speeches of Clarence and Corinne which are often laced with double-consciousness, she also provides readers with the contending voices of those who perpetuate their subordination and also those who support the uplift of the racial orphan. On the one hand there are characters that treat them badly, like Corinne's mistress, Miss Rachel Penrose, and Clarence's antagonists Tom Greene and Sam Baker; on the other hand, there are characters that encourage and support their struggle to achieve self-improvement through education, like the Gray sisters and Dr. Barrett. On being exhorted by Helen Gray for not giving Corinne an opportunity to learn, Miss Penrose replies, "It would just put notions in her head, and she'd be getting above her place" (51). Clearly, this world view was not in favor of providing racial

orphans any opportunity to acquire knowledge and improve their social condition. The orphaned siblings desire to apply themselves and change their condition is not always challenged by characters in the novel, the Gray sisters and Dr. Barrett seem genuinely concerned and support Clarence and Corinne. To add to these characters, Johnson creates a variety of characters; some place obstacles while others aid them in their struggle to achieve self-sufficiency. These diverse characters and the presence of diverse worldviews that compete in the text offer readers a glimpse of “the verbal-ideological life of the nation and the epoch” (*Dialogic Imagination* 273). Heteroglossia in Johnson’s *Clarence and Corinne* is also embodied in her very act of imitating a discourse made popular by Stowe. As Bakhtin explains, “heteroglossia consciously opposed to the literary language [...] was parodic, aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time. It was heteroglossia that had been dialogized (*Dialogic Imagination* 273). Unlike Stowe’s black characters who have no agency whatsoever, Johnson affords some agency to Clarence and Corinne. Although Johnson uses the same discourse as Stowe, she does invest it with parody by opposing the official white women’s voice of its time, thereby, making her novel dialogic. In following Stowe’s tradition, Johnson simultaneously acknowledges Stowe’s contribution in improving the African Americans’ plight as her narrative enjoins readers’ to empathize with the African Americans’ plight and also parodies and cancels out Stowe’s portrayal of Topsy Turvy through her own portrayal of Clarence and Corinne. Hence, Johnson’s novel illustrates both her and the racial orphans’ double-consciousness through the dialogism present in the competing worldviews prevalent in the era.

In addition to the African American women writers, politically nuanced native Indian orphan fiction has also been written by a woman—Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* (1884). The novel frames the orphan story of its female protagonist to draw attention to the native Indian

plight, also the metaphoric orphans of the new republic. Jackson sublimates her political rhetoric in favor of native Indian inclusion in the new republic through the story of Ramona, a mestiza. Jackson's *Ramona* stresses the impossibility of remaining in America and not performing whiteness. Ramona discovers her native Indian ancestry and later elopes with the native Indian Alessandro in an act of defiance and rebellion. Growing up on the ranch of Senora Moreno, Ramona is already excluded from white America; she further alienates herself by marrying Alessandro and going away with him. Ramona's plight is representative of the literary silence about native Indian orphans in the postbellum. Jackson criticizes American societies' inherent racism made evident by its narrative silence on orphans of other races.

Like Johnson's *Clarence and Corinne*, Jackson's *Ramona* borrows heavily from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Although Stowe champions better treatment of the slaves in antebellum America, her novel's cultural prominence is clearly evident from the different literary imitations of some its tropes. Postbellum orphans of color are depicted by their writers in a similar light. These orphan narratives do not challenge the assumptions of race that the dominant white race had imposed on the culture, but present an alternative view of orphans of color as possessing the requisite qualities to conform to assumptions of behavior mostly defined by the white race. Hence, they do challenge the dominant race's attempt to write them off as incapable, but do so only by mimicking white behavior of pursuing education, going to church, displaying proper manners and behaviors for the genders etc. These white women writers participate in nation building by writing these novels of social reform that advocated assimilation rather than racial exclusion of their antebellum sisters (Gonzalez 441). Sentimental women writers' reform novels of the antebellum and the postbellum are the outcome of their desire to participate in public affairs and to challenge patriarchy. With that intention, Jackson penned *A Century of Dishonor*

(1881), a treatise exhorting Congress on its failed promises to the native Indian population in America. She distributed it in Congress to call it to action, but the treatise failed to have any impact. *Ramona* is the narrative equivalent of the political treatise Jackson first wrote. By rewriting her non-fictional treatise in the fictional mold, Jackson's *Ramona* enters into a dialogic relationship not just with each other, but also with Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Hence, in *Ramona* we have "an intentional stylistic hybrid" (*Dialogic Imagination* 76). Like Johnson, Jackson too relies on Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the literary precursor of the genre of the sentimental reform novel. Unlike Johnson, Jackson's appropriation of the discourse popularized by Stowe aims more at its reverent use than a parody, still making it dialogic according to Bakhtin,

Every type of intentional stylistic hybrid is more or less dialogized. This means that the languages that are crossed in it relate to each other as do rejoinders in a dialogue; there is an argument between styles of language. But it is not a dialogue in the narrative sense, nor in the abstract sense; rather it is a dialogue between points of view, each with its own concrete language that cannot be translated into the other. (*Dialogic Imagination* 76)

Hence, even though Jackson borrows Stowe's literary style, and writes in that tradition, her novel presents her point of view, which is distinct from Stowe, as it should be because they write at different epochs and with different subjects in mind. Jackson's point of view with regard to the native Indian populations is informed by Stowe's point of view on blacks. Although different, both points of view can "interilluminate" each other. A hybrid literary work is proof of the "interanimation" of all the works that shape it. Jackson's hybrid recreates the plight of Native Indians to move audiences to protest against the US government's actions, namely violating the treaties and encouraging racial violence (Gonzalez 442). The novel gained popularity and was serialized in the *Christian Union* in 1884. 21,000 copies were sold on its first run.

In addition to the dialogism in the novel, Du Bois's idea of the simultaneous existence of two distinct souls in the emancipated blacks of America is also evident in the mixed blood Ramona. Although the novel focusses on the mestiza, Ramona, the novel is populated by various native Indians of different occupations as she highlights their livelihood. Orphaned at a young age, Ramona is brought up by Senora Moreno. *Ramona's* plot at the beginning offers readers a meandering tale of Ramona's parents. Her father, a Scotchman Angus Phail, loved Senora Moreno's older sister, who he wishes to marry. On being rebuffed by her, he rashly engages in a relationship with a native Indian woman, who gives birth to Ramona. Having many children of her own, Ramona's biological mother shows no interest in bringing her up. The distraught father gives her up for adoption to Senora Moreno's sister, whom he loved, and who, being in a bad marriage and childless, reciprocates Ramona's father's love by agreeing to bring Ramona up. When her health fails her, she requests her sister, Senora Moreno, to take care of Ramona. Having a son of her own who she adored, Senora Moreno grudgingly accepts her sister's request. As a consequence, she does bring up Ramona, but making the orphan girl aware of her dislike. Senora Moreno's lack of feelings for Ramona was a result of both the condition of her birth and her mixed blood. She makes it very clear: "If the child were pure Indian, I would like it better," she said. "I like not these crosses. It is the worst, and not the best of each, that remains" (41). While people of other races were looked with suspicion, the mixed blood that could pass as white was viewed with more condescension. Definitive racial markers were easier to separate and exclude people, but the lack of these markers, especially in the mixed blood orphans was often associated with taint. Szasz notes that Scottish fur traders in the American West would often enter into legally binding marriages with Indian women. Such marriages were encouraged as they helped the fur trade (30). Only through marriage could these Scottish traders gain access

to Native Indian life. He also mentions that from the late eighteenth century to early eighteenth century in Georgia alone about 400 mixed blood children lived. These mestizo were considered cultural intermediaries. Ramona was also Scoto-Indian. Another notable Scoto-Indian was Sophia Alice Callahan,<sup>31</sup> and she wrote about the plight of the Native Indians. Ramona exemplifies the condition of the mixed blood. While most of them played a prominent cultural role, Ramona's orphan condition does not give her the same prominence. Although such marriages helped the Scottish traders, who usually went back to Scotland to marry Scottish women or were already married and had families they returned to after their business expeditions were over, the plight of the Native Indian wives and their mixed blood children was particularly distressing (Szasz 30). Since marriages between whites and non-whites were not legally and socially accepted, the mestizo or the mulatto children, the metaphorical orphans, had no legal recourse to property belonging to their white fathers (Milteers 613), and "he or she was a site for radical speculation provoked by uncomfortable mystification" (Boeckman 32). Thus, Ramona's double-consciousness is even more pronounced owing to her mixed blood. While those belonging to other races are quite aware of their otherness, the mixed blood orphans, sometimes physically just as white as other whites suffered both condescension and persistent internal conflict.

Ramona's double-consciousness becomes evident when still a little girl of ten she asks Senora Moreno about her origins, only to be denied a definite answer. Her question to Senora Moreno about her origin seems to be the culmination of her own self-questionings about what her position was in the Moreno household. Ramona's physical appearance, noticed by the characters in the novel, and her own awareness of her difference or "otherness," spurs her to

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<sup>31</sup> Callahan died very young, hence not much is known about her, but her father Samuel Benton Callahan was a prominent politician and was a Scoto-Indian.

approach Senora Moreno. But Senora Moreno's response, redolent of the cultural prejudice of the mestiza, is harsh:

"Ramona," she said firmly, "while you are a little girl, you cannot understand any of these things. When you are a woman, I will tell you all that I know myself about your father and your mother. It is very little. Your father died when you were only two years old. All that you have to do is to be a good child, and say your prayers, and when Father Salvierderra comes he will be pleased with you. And he will not be pleased if you ask troublesome questions. Don't ever speak to me again about this. When the proper time comes I will tell you myself." (44)

Senora Moreno's refusal to divulge the truth about Ramona's origin leaves the ten year old distraught, but she continues to remain cheerful. Jackson's omniscient narrator informs us that:

A nature less gentle than Ramona's would have been embittered, or at least hardened, by this consciousness. But Ramona's was not. She never put it in words to herself. She accepted it, as those born deformed seem sometimes to accept the pain and isolation caused by their deformity, with an unquestioning acceptance, which is as far above resignation, as resignation is above rebellious repining. (45)

Jackson's ruminations on Ramona's state of mind echoes Du Bois's thoughts, "But the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate" (13). Ramona internalized her self-questionings and self-disparagement. She did not express her doubts or charge Senora Moreno for her prejudices against her, instead she took it with equanimity:

No one would have known, from Ramona's face, manner, or habitual conduct, that she had ever experienced a sorrow or had a care. Her face was sunny, she had a joyous voice, and never was seen to pass a human being without a cheerful greeting, to highest and lowest the same. (45)

Instead of engaging in recriminations over her plight, Ramona, like the African American characters, tried to apply herself to the opportunity made available to her. Jackson writes:

Her [Ramona's] industry was tireless. She had had two years at school, in the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Los Angeles, where the Senora had placed her at much personal sacrifice, during one of the hardest times the Moreno estate had ever seen. Here she had



won the affection of all the Sisters, who spoke of her habitually as the "blessed child." They had taught her all the dainty arts of lace-weaving, embroidery, and simple fashions of painting and drawing, which they knew; not overmuch learning out of books, but enough to make her a passionate lover of verse and romance. For serious study or for deep thought she had no vocation. She was a simple, joyous, gentle, clinging, faithful nature, like a clear brook rippling along in the sun,—a nature as unlike as possible to the Senora's, with its mysterious depths and stormy, hidden currents. (45-46 )

Given the opportunity, Ramona, like most orphans, of color or low social class, tried her best to acquire some knowledge. She quickly wins the heart of the nuns at the convent as she does with Father Salvierderra, who calls her "the blessed child." Jackson's narrative makes Ramona's likeability evident, and attributes Senora Moreno's continued disregard for Ramona to an inherent racism or prejudice against the Scoto-Indians. Ramona, being aware of Senora Moreno's lack of appreciation for her, tries to appease and win her favor, but to no avail:

Of these Ramona was dimly conscious, and at times had a tender, sorrowful pity for the Senora, which she dared not show, and could only express by renewed industry, and tireless endeavor to fulfil every duty possible in the house. This gentle faithfulness was not wholly lost on Senora Moreno, though its source she never suspected; and it won no new recognition from her for Ramona, no increase of love. (45)

Although Senora Moreno would not accept Ramona, Jackson portrays her as a very shrewd lady. Senora Moreno's characterization to some extent mimics the writers of sentimental fiction and its manipulations by women, Jackson stresses on how she manipulated her son into doing what she wanted. Although it applies to Senora Moreno in *Ramona*, it can also be applied to Stowe and Jackson's artistic manipulations:

To attain one's ends in this way is the consummate triumph of art. Never to appear as a factor in the situation; to be able to wield other men, as instruments, with the same direct and implicit response to will that one gets from a hand or a foot,—this is to triumph, indeed: to be as nearly controller and conqueror of Fates as fate permits. There have been men prominent in the world's affairs at one time and another, who have sought and studied such a power and have acquired it to a great degree. By it they have manipulated legislators, ambassadors, sovereigns; and have grasped, held, and played with the destinies of empires. But it is to be questioned whether even in these notable instances there has ever been so marvelous completeness of success as is sometimes seen in the case of a woman in whom the power is an instinct and not an attainment; a passion rather

than a purpose. Between the two results, between the two processes, there is just that difference which is always to be seen between the stroke of talent and the stroke of genius. (15)

The above quote exemplifies the use of the art of fiction to manipulate society to reflect on and redress its petty prejudices. Jackson's task in *Ramona* is to encourage her readers to self-question themselves about their prejudices regarding the Native Indians in general. While Ramona, the literary orphan, is the central protagonist of the novel, Jackson also presents the trope of the Native Indians, a dispossessed ethnic group, as orphaned. The novel provides a detailed description of Native Indians in the novel. Unlike Johnson, Jackson was a white woman writing about the plight of the Native Indians: "Casting Indians as the saintly victims of rapacious, corrupt, and decidedly brutal whites, *Ramona* would exercise domestic influence hidden in narrative form to achieve reformist ends" (Gonzalez 442). Jackson's weaving of multiple worldviews informs and animates her writing. The novel's dialogism offers readers the different points of view pertaining to Native Americans in general (as metaphorical orphans of the new republic), and Ramona, the real Native American orphan in the story.

Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* marks a departure from the sentimental fiction that was mostly written by women. Twain's narrative is also dialogic like Jackson's and Johnson's, but the dialogism in *Huckleberry Finn* is deployed through heteroglossia and skaz. As pointed out before, heteroglossia implies the presence of a diversity of speech types within a language or the "internal differentiation, the stratification characteristic of any national language" (*Dialogic Imagination* 67). Skaz, on the other hand, "is above all an orientation toward *someone else's speech*, and only then, as a consequence, toward oral speech" (emphasis in original) (*Dostoevsky* 191). Unlike heteroglossia, then, skaz is an intentional stylistic tool employed by a writer. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain employs skaz to introduce

someone else's voice, a voice socially distinct, carrying with it precisely those points of view and evaluations necessary to the author. What is introduced here, in fact, is a storyteller, and a storyteller, after all, is not a literary person; he belongs in most cases to the lower social strata, to the common people (precisely this is important to the author)—and he brings with him oral speech” (*Dostoevsky 192*)

Twain creates Huck, socially distinct as a town pariah, to give readers a point of view that is necessary for the plot. According to Bakhtin, an understanding of skaz as “an orientation toward oral speech, is necessarily inherent” (*Dostoevsky 191*), but

To see in skaz only oral speech is to miss the main point. What is more, a whole series of intonational, syntactic, and other language phenomena in skaz (when the author is oriented toward another person's speech) can be explained precisely by its double-voicedness, by the intersection within it of two voices and two accents. (*Dostoevsky 192*)

Albeit different, heteroglossia and skaz both enable dialogism in a literary work. When skaz is present, readers can be doubly sure that the writer intentionally makes his discourse double-voiced. Twain’s double-voiced discourse combined with Huck’s double-consciousness renders *Huckleberry Finn* dialogic, maybe an intentional dialogism to afford readers “a specific manner of seeing [...] the world” (*Dostoevsky 192*).

In addition to enhancing the dialogism in *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain also subverts Du Bois’s double-consciousness in a serio-comical fashion. Twain’s protagonist, Huckleberry Finn, the town pariah, is a half-orphan without proper parental guidance. His father, Pap Finn, cares for nothing but alcohol and the means of procuring it. Although Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn* in 1885, the narrative is situated in the antebellum years of slavery. Since Twain, the son of a normative middle class white family, had “no adequate form for the unmediated expression of ... [his] thoughts, he must resort to refracting them in someone else's discourse” (*Dostoevsky 192*). In recounting his past life in the town of St. Petersburg, the narrator, Huck Finn, provides readers a vignette of life before the Civil War. The purpose behind telling a story of a different time is most evidently nostalgia, but also to parody the tradition of the bad boy books made popular by

Thomas Aldrich Bailey. In his novel, *The Story of the Bad Boy*, Bailey retells a story of the antebellum which focusses on middle class white privilege. Twain scholars contend that both *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* belong to the bad boy genre.<sup>32</sup> While Twain does imitate the genre in *Tom Sawyer*, in *Huckleberry Finn* Twain parodies and surpasses the bad boy genre. Although parody is innate to the novel, as Bakhtin states “Throughout its [novel’s] entire history there is a consistent parodying or travesty of dominant or fashionable novels that attempt to become models for the genre; parodies on the chivalric romance of adventure ... This ability of the novel to criticize itself is a remarkable feature of this ever-developing genre” (*Dialogic Imagination* 6), Twain parodies not only the bad boy genre but also Tom’s repertoire of chivalric adventure stories. The difference between the unschooled Huck and Tom becomes apparent in the following exchange:

“Ransomed? What’s that?”

“I don’t know. But that’s what they do. I’ve seen it in books; and so of course that’s what we’ve got to do.”

“But how can we do it if we don’t know what it is?”

“Why blame it all, we’ve got to do it. Don’t I tell you it’s in the books? Do you want to go to doing different from what’s in the books, and get things all muddled up?”

(HF13)

The verbal irony in this exchange clearly indicates the muddle these books had created in the mind of the unsuspecting Tom. Not knowing the meaning of “ransomed,” he was adamant on pursuing whatever it meant. The dialogism becomes apparent when Twain very deftly illustrates the different worldviews of these two boys through this mundane conversation. The novel parodies itself through the different speech types of the boys and also indicates their worldviews. While Tom quite easily fits into the bad boy of the bad boy genre popularized by Bailey, Huck stands out for many reasons. Unlike the genre conventions of the bad boy book, he is an orphan

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed discussion on the genre conventions of the bad boy genre, see Gribben (p.15-21) and Kidd (p. 49-63).

from the lowest rung of society who does not play practical jokes on slaves (on the solitary occasion in the novel when he does play a prank on Jim, he is quick to seek forgiveness) nor does he get civilized according to societal norms, instead he gives up on society. At the end of the novel he announces: “I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before” (226). While all novels are parodies in some form, *Huckleberry Finn* is more so an intentional stylistic hybrid.

In addition to parodying the bad boy genre and satirizing the ways of the civilized world, the presence of heteroglossia in Twain’s novel adds to its dialogism. Instead of presenting the authoritative voice of the dominant white race, Twain’s novel exhibits heteroglossia in the diversity of speech types contained in the novel. These diverse speech types point not only to the diverse array of characters in his novel but also diversity in terms of its presentation of other races. In doing so, Twain imitates life in the southern states and also brings into relief the striking social and racial inequality of that life. Although heteroglossia is evident in the novel, Twain announces his intention to present different dialects spoken in the South at the very beginning. In a brief explanatory note he writes:

In this book a number of dialects are used, to wit: the Missouri negro dialect; the extremest form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect; the ordinary “Pike County” dialect; and four modified varieties of this last. The shadings have not been done in a haphazard fashion, or by guesswork; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech. I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding. (1)

Twain’s deployment of heteroglossia in *Huckleberry Finn* is deliberate and as an “intentional stylistic hybrid” it engages the multiple points-of views he wishes to present. The number of dialects Twain uses corresponds to the worldviews he incorporates. In creating St. Petersburg,

Twain draws from his own experience of growing up in Missouri. He relies on his knowledge of the various dialects spoken there and incorporates it into the novel. Unlike *Tom Sawyer*, narrated by an adult omniscient narrator, *Huckleberry Finn* is narrated by Huck the adolescent. Twain's use of vernacular adds to the novel's appeal. Instead of relying on the voice of the dominant race, Twain consciously subverts it to give us the other voices which are usually silent.

Although endearing, Huck Finn's characterization is shorn of any sentimentalism, Twain's orphan does not seem to suffer any self-disparagement like the other racial orphans. Albeit white, Huck is an outcast, pointing perhaps to his non-white race. His social position equates him to the slaves in the town of St. Petersburg. In spite of the townsfolk's attitude toward him, Twain characterizes Huck as a social activist willing to come to the rescue of the underdog in the novel. Whether it is Jim or the Wilks's orphans, Huck is ready to risk his life to save them. Twain's narrative of Huck Finn and his social class in the town of St. Petersburg evokes the condition of the newly arrived Irish immigrants in America in the antebellum years. Although Twain drops no hints about Huck's Irish identity, Huck could very possibly be Irish. In *How the Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev chronicles the lives of Irish immigrants in America and in one section discusses Huck's ethnic identity. Ignatiev argues that the Irish were very similar to the Blacks in the nineteenth century. Ignatiev draws attention to Huck Finn and contends that Huck could very possibly be an Irish:

Recently a literary historian asked about Mark Twain's character Huck Finn, "Was Huck Black?" Through a comparison of Afro-American speech patterns with Huck's speech, and through the discovery of a ten-year-old Negro boy who may have served Twain as a model for Huck, she concluded that yes, Huck Finn was part black. Her question prompts another: Was Huck Irish? (57-58)

Ignatiev digs out further proof of his claim by quoting a Twain letter dated May 7, 1884 in which Twain wrote "I returned the book-back [book cover for *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*].

All right and good, and will answer, although the boy's mouth is a trifle more Irishy than necessary" (qtd in Ignatiev 58). Twain's attempt to scale down Huck's Irishness could be a writer's compulsion to appeal to a wider audience as the Irish were not well-liked. In *Tom Sawyer*, Twain makes it clear that Tom does not want to be seen in Huck's company, "He did not care to have Huck's company in public places" (*TS* 195). Tom Sawyer and the other white boys of St. Petersburg would also not be comfortable with any social interaction with a slave other than within the framework of the socially acceptable master slave relationship. These worldviews express the social conflict between people of different races who intermingled but in very limited ways. Unlike Tom Sawyer, Huck is well-liked by the slaves "becuz I don't ever act as if I was above him. Sometime I've set right down and eat *with* him" (*TS* 200-201). Ignatiev's intention in extricating evidence in support of Huck's Irishness may seem far-fetched, but his actual claim in his book that the Irish and the Black were similar in their social class in nineteenth-century America is plausible. Ignatiev is not alone in making this claim. Various other scholars, both literary and non-literary, have made similar assertions.<sup>33</sup> Irish life mirrored black lives. Native born whites were quite comfortable with blacks, as their distinct skin color separated them as "the other" easily. The Irish were not as easily integrated to American white society owing to them sharing the same skin color with native born whites of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. Fearing that Irish degeneracy would be counter-productive to the ruling whites, these whites repelled social interaction with the Irish on account of being labelled under the same category. Obsessed with separating the white Irish from the other more cultured and educated

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<sup>33</sup> Most prominently, Ralph Ellison remarked in "What America Would be like without Blacks," "the black man [was] a co-creator of the language that Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence" (p.109). In *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African-American Voices*, Shelley Fishkin contends that "African-American voices shaped Twain's creative imagination at its core" (p. 4). Various other scholars have tried to suggest that Twain's model for Huck was a black child.

whites of British and Scottish origins, Irish immigrants faced more discrimination and prejudice than the blacks. Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* captures the public sentiment quite aptly. His acknowledgement of race relations in America is illustrated in the bonding of Huck Finn and Jim. The two protagonists bond while away from civilization. Twain subverts the dominant mood of the literary tradition which elides representing both blacks and the Irish as undesirable. Quite understandably *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* parodies the life and culture of the time he was writing. In subverting the dominant literary discourse, Twain draws attention to the gaps in it. Although sentimental fiction written by women is commended by some recent feminist critics, it needs to be pointed out that white women writers used the genre as a form of control and to rebuff white patriarchy, ultimately to stake a claim in society.<sup>34</sup> With the aim of increasing women's participation in public life, sentimental fiction offered many advantages as it drew attention to the plight of blacks in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the native Americans in Jackson's *Ramona*, but it does so in a manner in which white superiority, especially the worth of white women, is upheld. Such discourse fails to concede that people of other races, considered subordinate by the dominant white race, could also possess traits and qualities worth praising. It fails to view orphans of other races as capable of cultivating a life of their own instead of mimicking white manners. These works celebrate racial orphans who can perform whiteness. Twain explores the possibility of a different worldview through his portrayal of Huck and Jim, an alternate world with different set of beliefs that does not need to appropriate whiteness. Despite claims to the contrary, Twain's portrayal of Huck and Jim, their humanity, their flaws, and the camaraderie they develop, and the evolution of their characters make it evident that blacks and Irish were similar.

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<sup>34</sup> See Gonzalez 439-441.



Twain's portrayal of Huck undergoes a transformation from *Tom Sawyer* to *Huckleberry Finn*. In *Tom Sawyer*, Huck is presented mostly as Tom's protégé, learning the ways of the white world from him. Enamored by Tom, Huck follows Tom's commands throughout *Tom Sawyer*, but in *Huckleberry Finn*, especially in the long middle section of the novel, Twain provides Huck the opportunity to experience the world and live his life divorced from the hegemonic white society. Before he embarks on the journey in the river Mississippi, in the first and last section of the novel, Huck continues to follow Tom's orders, but not without questioning its apparent contradictions. Unlike the orphans in *Ramona* and *Clarence and Corinne*, Huck's double-consciousness is presented as bathetic. Instead of genuinely questioning his social condition and desiring a better life based on the standard set by whites, Huck desires the opposite. He seems comfortable in the kind of life he lives and doesn't yearn for education nor good clothes. Twain reverses the norm of the time which upheld white practices. Even then, in *Tom Sawyer*, as if in mock defiance of the socially accepted norm of white life as the beacon of civilization, Huck fabricated the doubts and internal wrangling most orphans, especially the racial orphans, were believed to experience. He displays a mock double-consciousness when he questions his condition:

Huck was silent while he framed a duly cautious reply. Then he said:

“Well, you see, I'm a kind of a hard lot,—least everybody says so, and I don't see nothing agin' it—and sometimes I can't sleep much, on account of thinking about it and sort of trying to strike out a new way of doing.” (*TS* 213)

Since *Tom Sawyer* focused on Tom's character, Twain presents Huck as Tom's foil. In emphasizing Tom, Huck's character is not developed as much. On the other hand, in *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain devotes his narrative energy in developing Huck's character. The roles are reversed. Unlike *Tom Sawyer*, in *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain makes Huck narrate his own story

in vernacular, hence enlivening the narrative. Instead of looking at his own condition and despairing, Huck questions the beliefs of the society. Twain does explore Huck's consciousness through persistent self-questionings like the Burton siblings and Ramona, but his double-consciousness is repurposed in a way that justifies his condition as a ragamuffin. Huck displays no interest mimicking white practices because he is busy pointing the inconsistencies in it. Instead of trying to improve his social status, Huck seems unperturbed by social stereotypes of Irish low class orphans that attempt to exclude them. Ruminating over the murderers in a wrecked ship near St. Louis, Huck tells himself: "I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix. I says to myself, there ain't no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself, yet, and then how would I like it" (*HF* 60). Huck enunciates white stereotype of the low-class Irish orphans, as if mocking the rationale behind it. There seems to be no desire in Huck to mimic the normative white middle-class child. He continues three chapters later, and informs us that when faced with the dilemma of being right or wrong, his motto was:

They went off and I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I see it warn't no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body that don't get *started* right when he's little ain't got no show—when the pinch comes there ain't nothing to back him up and keep him to his work, and so he gets beat. Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s'pose you'd a done right and give Jim up, would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad—I'd feel just the same way I do now. Well, then, says I, what's the use you learning to do right when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I couldn't answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn't bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever come handiest at the time. (*HF* 76)

In choosing to do whatever he felt was "handiest at the time," which in this case was helping Jim escape and going against the dictates of Southern society, Huck was determined to do it. While most excluded orphans desire acceptance by society, Huck's double-consciousness makes him consider the opposite. Twain's portrayal of Huck in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* explores

themes like race, the democratic ideal as ensconced in the Declaration of Independence, and human greed. In the middle section of the novel Twain guides his readers through the spectacle of nineteenth-century American life in all its reality and Huck's socialization, which entailed not only an awareness of his position in society but also a realization that he and Jim were equals to some extent. Huck's story is his struggle in society to find a place for himself. Huck exhibits very early in the story, in Chapter 3, that he reasons everything, he grapples with what he is told and what he should believe:

I set down, one time, back in the woods, and had a long think about it. I says to myself, if a body can get anything they pray for, why don't Deacon Winn get back the money the money he lost on pork? Why can't the widow get back her silver snuff-box that was stole? Why can't Miss Watson fat up? No, says I to myself, there ain't nothing in it. (*HF* 14)

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The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out." (*HF* 7)

Even though the widow herself may have been good to Huck, he mentions Miss Watson, who "worked me middling hard for about an hour" (*HF* 8). Huck is smart in realizing his status in the widow's household. Huck's adventure down the Mississippi with Jim affords him the opportunity to develop the only relationship he can have on an equal plane. This journey serves as his initiation into a world where he would be at par with slaves. Once Huck has acquired the knowledge of his real position, he can get rid of the "hilfalut'n foolishness," by negotiating an identity. Through constant speculations about his condition and his relationships with the people he interacts with, Huck acquires the true wisdom of his social position vis-à-vis the world. This wisdom is different from the wisdom of Clarence, Corinne, and Ramona. Huck yearns for a different world. Huck is not interested in following social norms like the others. Instead of

desiring education as a gateway to good life and ultimately social inclusion, he notices the inconsistencies and faults entrenched in social norms and desires to give up society altogether.

Orphans of non-white races experience double-consciousness, which manifests itself through persistent self-questionings and ruminations over their condition. Postbellum American fiction mostly presented American life through a biased white perspective, which became the normative American experience. A quintessential American existence was most definitely a middle-class white family life. Some aspects of this life that were considered normative were church-going, display of high morals, a good education, and a complete family. While people of other races (and the newly arriving Irish immigrants) struggled for such a life, orphans found it the most difficult to attain. Failure to live that life translated to exclusion from society. In the struggle to get acceptance, orphans struggled against all odds toward that goal.

### **Creating Class-Consciousness: The “Dangerous” Foundlings of Postbellum America**

“The struggle of classifications is a fundamental dimension of class struggle. The power to impose and inculcate a vision of divisions, that is, the power of making visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit, is the political power par excellence. It is the power to make groups, to manipulate the objective structure of society.”

Bourdieu “Social Space and Symbolic Power” 23

The power to make differences “visible and explicit,” to divide people into groups and to manipulate society into believing in the distinction of those groups based on class is “the political power par excellence” (“Forms of Capital” 23). According to Pierre Bourdieu’s “empirical investigations, these fundamental powers are economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital, which is the form that various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate”(“Forms of Capital”17). Based on these fundamental powers, and relying on “strategies of condescension” (“Forms of Capital”16) and “strategies of presentation of self” (“Forms of Capital” 20), nineteenth-century American society was stratified on class lines. Children in general, and orphans in particular were able to identify class affiliations based on the fundamental powers they possessed or lacked. This chapter attempts an anti-essentialist reading of class relating to orphans, mostly belonging to the working classes; however, an essentialist analysis of class identity based on specific social, economic, and cultural capital informs my reading of the orphans’ own understanding of their class. Furthermore, it looks at how working class orphans identified their class, through relational means, and the limits of such class boundaries. Orphans, from working class in particular, often used their class identity to their advantage when necessary. Although

society reified and fetishized, and thereby dehumanized,<sup>35</sup> these orphans, they in return rebuffed such attempts, sometimes by internalizing them and using them against society, and at other times by escaping civilization altogether. Looking at Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1868) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1874), Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1869), *Little Men* (1871), *Jo's Boys* (1886), and *Eight Cousins* (1875), and *A Voice from the Newsboys* by John Morrow, this chapter combines ideas of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and the French sociologist Bourdieu to establish the centrality of some specific markers that rendered class-consciousness and created division in nineteenth-century America and established the authority of the middle and upper classes over the orphans of the lower classes.

Class is commonly identified “as a location within a social hierarchy” (Schocket 12), thereby implying an exact position in society and the powers invested in that position. Although this definition of class generally predominates any analysis of class, according to the Weberian social analysis, “classes are relational rather than oppositional,” so that “[c]lass situation is ...ultimately market situation, and that life-chances” and market capacities determine this market situation” (Schocket 12). Classes are “relational” implies the existence of the different classes in relation to one another. Without the tangible presence of a working class, the presence of the middle or upper classes makes no sense. While classes are mutually exclusive, they are dependent on one another for their definition and existence. Class identities are also based on the opportunities or life chances made available to people. This in turn presupposes a stable or gradually improving economic situation, which improves life-chances for groups or classes,

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<sup>35</sup> In *Vanishing Moments*, Eric Schocket looks at how class was represented in American literature and he contends that class co-opted race, specifically white race. Schocket borrows Frederic Jameson's ideas to explain the formation and representation of class in American Literature, p. 30-31.

thereby increasing chances of being placed in the preferred class. Understanding class from this perspective makes class position incumbent on market or economic situation, and not birth as was the case in pre-industrial society in Europe. In the Industrial Age “social position was no longer dependent on birth but effort” (Day 8), paving the way for individuals to strive hard and climb the social ladder. Although class boundaries were strict, mobility, both upward and downward, was possible. While the prospect of upward mobility quite understandably was welcome, its opposite, downward mobility was cause for much trepidation.

The idea of the “American dream,” an important aspect of American life, has often been aligned with this notion of American society as classless. The absence of an aristocracy in America is quite possibly the main reason offered for such claims. Although this contention could be partially accurate when compared to the distinct class boundaries in Europe and other parts of the world, American society in the nineteenth century was becoming very class-conscious. The Civil War and the Reconstruction confirmed these fears. Class in America gradually manifested itself “embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms” (Thompson 10), and came to be “defined by men as they live their own history (Thompson 11), and was essentially “a social and cultural formation” (Thompson 11). The middle class in America played the most prominent role in society’s stratification. Before it ventured to define the other classes, “historically the middle class used different “strategies of identification of self” to define itself, in terms of three characteristics: acquired ability, social prestige, and a life style approaching an individual’s aspirations. The middle class in America was distinct from middle classes elsewhere, income or occupation did not restrict a person’s desire to belong to the middle class. In fact,

Being middle class in America has referred to a state of mind any person can adopt and make his own. It has not referred to a person's confined position in the social structure, a position delimited by common chances in the market and by preferred occupations. The popular imagination has so closely identified being middle class with pursuing the so-called American dream that "middle class" has come to be equated with a good chance for advancement, an expanding income, education, good citizenship—indeed, with democracy. (Bledstein 6-7)

Such were the origins of the middle class in America, which later required reassessment and redefinition. There was an inherent flexibility to the term initially, and it did not always imply a static place in society. Belonging to the middle class meant:

The middle-class person traversed the widening distance between these floors as he relentlessly maintained his individual identity. He could start out his career at an impoverished level but rise to wealth without changing his vocation, his social attitudes, his ethnic and religious associations. From the European perspective, neither the common mechanic nor the titled aristocrat retained this flexibility. Often they altered their relationship to the community, changed their occupations, and recast their social prejudices as they rose or fell in the social structure. (Bledstein 20)

Hence, the definition of the term in America varied from its use and meaning in Europe. In establishing itself as a separate class in the antebellum days, the emerging Northern middle class forged an identity in relation to the Southern plantation owners, who they projected as possessing "an uncontrollable lust and dissipation" (Bledstein 27). This definition required a reassessment in the postbellum and was replaced by a reliance on institutions that would legitimize the middle class on the basis of knowledge, institutions, and specialized services they performed (Bledstein 39). Gradually the confluence of economic, cultural and social capital was determined to be the main marker of middle-class life in America. In addition, a scrupulous Christian character was another requirement to belong to this clique. As the middle class acquired knowledge in the various universities in order to meet the demand for professionalization, the newly arriving immigrants in America crowded the cities and created much chaos. Through the strategies of condescension, which were



... strategies by which agents who occupy a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance between themselves and others, a distance which does not thereby cease to exist, thus reaping the profits of the recognition granted to a purely symbolic denegation of distance (“she is unaffected,” “he is not highbrow” or “stand-offish,” etc.) which implies a recognition of distances.

*(Social Space 16)*

Just as the middle class was trying to deal with the increasing number of immigrants, they were also “endlessly occupied in the negotiation of their own identity” (21), and Bourdieu states that although these strategies were “perfectly unconscious” they took “the form of what is called timidity or arrogance” (17). In such a manner, then, the middle class came to exist and separated itself from the “dangerous” classes.

The burgeoning middle class in Industrial America spurred many changes in society. Most importantly, the middle class consciously created an image of itself as the upholder of moral values. Behind such an image was the construction of the lower classes as its anti-thesis, the location of society’s vices, and also its unsuspecting scapegoat. According to Bourdieu, the middle class deployed the strategies of presentation of self and condescension of the lower classes to establish its superiority. This construction pervaded every facet of lower-class life, more so at its most vulnerable spaces. Orphans represent society’s most vulnerable section, and orphans belonging to the lower classes or ‘dangerous’ classes were at the lowest rung of social hierarchy, hence easy victims of middle-class social engineering. The upper or “fortunate” classes too did not escape middle-class censure, although they were not railed against as much as the lower classes. Often stereotyped as irresponsible and careless in worldly affairs, the upper class experienced a similar stereotyping by the middle class, which projected itself as the epitome of moral values. Middle-class control of life in the nineteenth century, manifested in culture and social affairs, subtly projected itself as the better class.

A very prescriptive notion of class gained currency in the nineteenth century. The word ‘class’ soon transformed into a complicated social construction aimed at the exclusion of the lower or working class. In trying to create strict class lines, society imposed its desire to separate groups based on economic conditions. This veiled attempt manipulated a specific group of people into believing that they were worse than others by pointing out their group characteristics. Although Gary Day defines class to simply imply divisions in society (2), an etymological study of the word pertinent to this study—denoting division or grouping of people— can be traced back to the sixth-century BC,<sup>36</sup> but a more modern implication of the word denoting division based on income and social situation came into existence with the rise of capitalist economy. Although some form of division in society always existed, industrialization made those divisions more cogent. The creation of both the middle class and the working class catalyzed these changes in society. The antagonism between these classes, or the middle-class’ desire to carefully separate itself from the working class, spurred the victimization of the working class. Shedding valuable light on the creation of class, Stephen P. Rice writes “an oppositional understanding of class came into focus” (3) in industrial age “inscribing inequality” and creating distinct class positions in society. Work, or the nature of work, was central to the notion of class (Rice 4). While the role of the working class was considered significant in the growth and progress of the nation, the working class itself was denied a part in its prosperity owing to its so-called misguided propensities. Although they fulfilled the labor demand of the nation and contributed immensely in nation building, their demands somehow became insignificant. Thus, it was rather paradoxical that the working class was a crucial component of nineteenth-century

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<sup>36</sup> Gary Day traces a brief history of the word class as undergoing constant reevaluation in its exact implication. He notes that in Rome, Servius Tullius (578-534 BC) divided Romans into property classes, resulting in two major classes, the patricians or aristocrats, and the plebeians or commoners, p. 3-4.

Industrial America but was denied respect. The middle class, the self-appointed cartographer of society, employed the “strategy of presentation of self” and the strategy of condescension” to maintain social status quo as Schocket astutely notes

The “coeval emergence [of the realist novel and market capitalism] was, in fact, no coincidence—[that], rather, literary realism arose in tandem with the middle class, whose individualistic values it uniquely expressed...Realism’s epistemological stress on the empirical, on the “hard facts” and the realia of the referent, also corresponds to the bureaucratic rationalism of the marketplace under capitalism, to the newly predominate values of quantification and predictability. (23)

Thus, the emergent middle-class, informed by changing market forces, dominated the social and cultural sphere, and the realist novel served as a handmaiden to this project. As a result, “By 1860, and especially in cities and industrial centers, American men and women had forged distinct working-class and middle-class identities through a variety of social and cultural practices, identities that frequently brought them into conflict with one another” (Rice 5). In addition to the nature of work being a marker, the presence or absence of certain cultural and social practices created further rifts in society. Cultural pursuits and practices began to be strictly identified by socio-economic groups and further alienated them. Dimock and Gilmore corroborate, “stratification in the cultural realm happened not alone but in complicated interaction with a parallel stratification in the social realm, the articulation of a new-style “high” social class” (157). This definition of the term “class” will be pertinent to this study: class implying a gap between groups of people based on their vocation, earnings, cultural practices, and group characteristics.

Citing scores of reasons to validate their attempt to repress orphans belonging to the lower classes, many social reformers and writers portrayed them as waifs, prone to committing crimes, owing to the absence of any moral sense. This view of orphans of low socio-economic groups points at the schizophrenic attitude that persisted throughout the nineteenth century.

Although many changes in the perception of children in general were introduced,<sup>37</sup> lower class orphans continued to be viewed as social eyesores. Despite the fact that these orphans displayed some palpable class identifiers—they were unkempt, ill-mannered, illiterate, and unsophisticated—somehow their praiseworthy qualities like pluck, smart, and grit, were not highlighted as it would not serve the purpose of repressing and controlling them. Their growing numbers and visibility in city streets concerned everyone causing much consternation among middle-class social workers to look for ways in which they could be evicted and made useful to society.

The crowding of New York's streets (and other major cities in America) in the middle of the nineteenth century, a direct outcome of the industrial revolution, brought massive changes to society. An understanding into these changes might be helpful to ascertain the actual situation and look at why such fervent attempts were made to remove the little street Arabs. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, Friedrich Engels looks into the creation of the new industrial working class and asks a very pertinent question:

What is to become of those destitute millions, who consume to-day what they earned yesterday; who have created the greatness of England by their inventions and their toil; who become with every passing day more conscious of their might, and demand, with daily increasing urgency, their share of the advantages of society? ( )

Although Engels discusses conditions in England, which was more industrialized than America, some of these conditions existed in America as well. The overcrowded industrial tenements in America were considered as a veritable hell-hole by many, especially the city's advocates of morality: the "moral" middle class. Although these social reformers cited altruistic reasons for

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<sup>37</sup> Zelizer, Nelson, Lyon, and Boeckman point out that notions about childhood and children undergo many changes in this time period. These changes usually encompass race, class, and gender. Brace's treatise *The Dangerous Classes of New York* provides us with the most insight into prejudices against orphans.

intervening in the lives of the swarming working class, whose children, mostly orphans, were filling up city streets. In reality an underlying fear of their teeming numbers and their growing power forced the social reformers to intervene before the problem snowballed. Engels aptly sums up the threat that was looming:

The ‘dangerous class’, the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue. (308)

Fear of an unrest by the ‘social scum’ triggered many counter-measures. The growing numbers of the street children—mostly forced to work on the streets, either peddling wares, or selling newspapers, or offering services like the shoe-shine boys—were more of a threat than factory workers on account of the lack of any adult supervision. The death of one parent, usually father, or both parents, deprived these children of care, and forced them to earn their living, and sometimes required some to take care of family members. Their growing numbers coupled with the increase in crime forced people to find a permanent solution to this problem, which seemed to worsen with every passing day. In Boston, the practice of placing such children out to rural farms was started, but later discontinued.<sup>38</sup> This idea was later borrowed by social workers in New York to solve the city’s growing “street Arab” problem. As a result of his program, many orphans—full orphans, half-orphans, and dependent street children—were placed out in homes in the West. Placing out was actually a euphemism for cheap labor and similar to slavery. Citing the deleterious effects of street life, these social workers highlighted the benefits of placing out, but not the cheap labor extracted in return. Removal from cities and separation from close family members caused much anguish to the children, but that too was not discussed. According to

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<sup>38</sup> Hacsí and Pazicky point out that Brace borrowed the idea of ‘placing out’ the street children of New York from a Boston Pastor.

Engels, the middle-class retained all the sentimental aspects of family for itself, but “tor[e] away from the [working class] family its sentimental veil, and . . .reduced the family relation to a mere money relation” (303). It is quite noteworthy that after the Civil War, with abolition causing a reassessment of the demand and supply of labor, placing out was gradually initiated to meet the pressing needs of the nation. In a very subtle manner, under the guise of genuine concern for the orphans, Charles L. Brace and his cohort of professional social workers replaced slavery with the practice of placing out.

In *The Dangerous Classes of New York* (1872), Brace, a conservative social reformer of New York, describes the presence of two classes in the large cities of America—“the dangerous classes” and the “moral and fortunate classes.”<sup>39</sup> According to his classification, “the dangerous classes” comprise the poor immigrants living in tenements in large cities, particularly New York. On the other hand, under the broad categorization of the “moral and fortunate classes,” he conflates the upper class of New York and the burgeoning middle class. Brace generalizes in both cases; he projects every poor person in New York as a moral degenerate who threatens society, and hails those who belong to the middle or upper class as morally superior. Such “classificatory thinking” in the nineteenth century created class consciousness and division. Brace’s problematic construction of class echoes similar attempts by the middle-class to dissociate itself from the swarming working class immigrant population in America’s large cities in the Industrial Age by identifying tangible and intangible markers to establish class. By focusing on the street children in the large cities in America, Brace’s detailed treatise focusses on every facet of their life and manners. Under the guise of rendering service to these children, who

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Loring Brace, “Introduction,” *The Dangerous Classes of New York*, Although Brace’s study covers New York City, his work can be analyzed to understand the underpinnings of class consciousness in America.

can broadly be categorized as orphans, Brace and his Children's Aid Society (CAS) were responsible for placing out street children to the Midwest. Brace's "othering" of working class street children (mostly orphans) by conflating the terms "street children" and "dangerous" accentuates the threat posed by them. Such attempts by Brace and other social-reformers of the nineteenth century created strict class boundaries and class consciousness, created fear and anxiety about such children, and also initiated subtle forms of intervention and control over them in Industrial America.

Projecting children, mostly orphans from low socio-economic classes as a threat to society, Brace created a heightened sense of class-consciousness for his readers, presumably literate middle and upper class adults of New York City, co-opting them to participate in his cause. Brace's demarcation of strict class boundaries, a result of 'classificatory thinking' was not unique to him. Social stratification and classification was an outcome of Linnaean taxonomy which classified plants and animals based on a hierarchy. Classification, particularly based on socio-economic conditions, gradually dominated the social scene. Social changes after the Civil War further complicated and reinforced class boundaries. Alongside the numerous attempts to draw strict lines were opposing impulses to thwart those attempts. Post-Civil War writing, both fictional and non-fictional, was vastly shaped by class—some writers reinforced class boundaries, others challenged it. This constant tug of war marks most of the writing in this age. America's orphans—best represented by the street children belonging to these "dangerous classes" discussed in great detail in Brace's treatise—were crucial in defining class boundaries. The middle class identified tangible and intangible markers to establish or abolish class identity among the orphan street children: clothes, manners or behavior, personal cleanliness, knowledge, and religious morals. In addition to these, the culture played an important role in both projecting

and establishing class identity and simultaneously nullifying them in society. The presence of such competing impulses animates nineteenth century. According to Bourdieu, by imposing a vision of division between children in New York, Brace's treatise manipulates society in order to create a hierarchy. Among them, Brace was probably most vocal in condemning the low morals and wasteful ways of these children. He writes:

But the virtues of the poor spring very much from their affections and instincts; they have comparatively little self-control, the high lessons of duty and consideration for others are seldom stamped on them, and Religion does not much influence their more delicate relations with those associated with them. They might shelter a strange orphan for years with the greatest kindness; but the bearing and forbearing with the faults of another person's child year after year, merely from motives of duty or affection to its parent, belong to a higher range of Christian virtues, to which they seldom attain. Their own want of self-control and their tendency to jealousy, and little understanding of true self-sacrifice, combine to weaken and embitter these relations with step-children. The children themselves have plenty of faults, and have doubtless been little governed, so that soon both parties jar and rub against one another; and as neither have instincts or affections to fall back upon, mere principle or sense of duty is not enough to restrain them. What would be simply slights or jars in more controlled persons, become collisions in this class? (39-40)

Predicting the future class conflicts that could arise in society, Brace advocates intervention in their lives.

Although class consciousness pervaded every aspect of life in post bellum America, it became more pronounced in discussions of orphans mostly belonging to the lower classes in major cities and country sides. The fate of the orphan concerned many, particularly because of their growing numbers after the Civil war. While the street orphans of the major cities were quite infamous, their counterparts in country sides also became the topic of much fictional and non-fictional questioning. To offset the indigent orphans, the orphans from upper and middle class were also represented in many fictional works of that period, but their portrayals differed vastly from those of street orphans. It was a fairly common practice for orphans from fairly solvent homes to be placed under the care of family members, hence they were spared the trials and



tribulations faced by the orphans belonging to the “dangerous classes.” Even then, their upbringing, or what constituted an “appropriate” upbringing became the topic of some animated discussion, thus creating a national debate. Orphans from the lower class were identified primarily through negation—possessing no knowledge or literacy, no religious morality, and no cultural capital. Upper class orphans were separated by society on the basis of their better material conditions, knowledge, religious morality, and most importantly their exposure to culture in spite of absent parent or parents. Culture also became a site of middle-class intervention, splitting into high and low. Bourdieu’s claim about culture as a tool in creating distinct class identities explains the middle class’ dominance in the cultural realm and how it shaped cultural practices in nineteenth-century America. According to Bourdieu,

The primary differences, those which distinguish the major classes or conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers—economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital. The distribution of the different classes (and class fractions) thus runs from those who are best provided with both economic and cultural capital to those who are most deprived in both respects. (*Distinction* 114)

Hence, economic capital determines cultural capital. Both these capitals cumulatively determined class in postbellum America. Specific cultural practices and pursuits came to be identified with different social classes. Quite understandably, the cultural practices of the lower classes were placed at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy, and those of the middle and upper classes were placed at the top. Entrenched with such definite symbols of class, the Industrial Age reinforced them simultaneously on society and on the young minds. Since the middle class already dominated the culture industry, their cultural practices and pursuits were highlighted and reinforced as ‘high’ culture and documented in the different modes of cultural practices. The same treatment was not meted out to the cultural modes practiced by the lower classes. As Bourdieu notes,

nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music. This is of course because, by virtue of the rarity of the conditions for acquiring the corresponding dispositions, there is no more 'classificatory practice than concert-going or playing a noble instrument. (*Distinction* 18)

Thus, playing the piano, staging plays, concert-going, and similar practices indulged by the middle class were discussed in detail in fiction and non-fiction. The pursuit of such "high" culture invariably expressed the class of the performer. In the depiction of orphans in fiction as well, culture becomes crucial. The absence of such pursuits is often used to establish the orphans' background, place in social hierarchy, and also as a tool of control. These cultural pursuits are often highlighted and manifested subtly in the fictional and non-fictional portrayals of orphans to establish class identity. Hence, in *Little Women*, Laurie belongs to the fortunate class on account of the economic capital his grandfather possesses, which provides him the opportunity to play the piano. The March girls also invest their leisure in rehearsing plays, playing musical instruments, reading, or painting. While it is understandable why Laurie can indulge in cultural pursuits, the March girls, despite their rather frugal lifestyle, invest a lot of time and effort in cultural pursuits, pointing to their better class and to their affluent past. It also points to the middle class desire to maintain status quo despite loss of economic capital. Hence, offering us a very complicated notion of class identity.

In *Eight Cousins*, Alcott presents two orphan girls of the same age belonging to different classes. Rose, is a scion of a wealthy family, and Phebe, is a poor housemaid to Rose's aunt. In their first encounter, Rose is surprised to find out that Phebe hasn't read any of the books she likes. Their innocent conversation illustrates the wide disparity in cultural pursuits.

"...Have you a guardian?"

"My sakes, no! I was left on the poor-house steps a little mite of a baby, and Miss Rogers took a liking to me, so I've been there ever since. But she is dead now, and I take care of myself."

“How interesting! It is like Arabella Montgomery in the ‘Gypsy’s Child.’ Did you ever read that sweet story?” asked Rose, who was fond of tales of foundling, and had read many.

“I don’t have any books to read, and all the spare time I get I run off into the woods; that rests me better than stories,” answered Phebe, as she finished one job and began on another. (13)

Although poor Phebe did not read books, she could sing beautifully, a skill she claims to have learned from “the birds,” which also helps her win Rose’s favor. Even a minimal cultural pursuit, the ability to sing beautifully, is often used to identify a better past and can improve Phoebe’s chances. Thus, culture becomes an important marker of class.

In addition to culture, class is defined and determined by the occupation engaged in and also on the basis of class relations between different people. Bourdieu throws further light on the definition of social class:

Social class is not defined by a property (not even the most determinant one, such as the volume and composition of capital) nor by a collection of properties (of sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin—proportion of blacks and whites, for example, or natives and migrants—income, educational level etc.), nor even by a chain of properties strung out from a fundamental property (position in the relations of production) in a relation of cause of effect, conditioner and conditioned; but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices. Constructing, as we have here, classes as homogeneous as possible with respect to the fundamental determinants of the material conditions of existence and the conditionings they impose, therefore means that even in constructing the classes and in interpreting the variations of the distribution of properties and practices in relation to these classes, one consciously takes into account the network of secondary characteristics which are more or less unconsciously manipulated whenever the classes are defined in terms of a single criterion, even one as pertinent as occupation.

(*Distinction* 106)

Bourdieu’s definition implies that social class is manifested in society through a “network of secondary characteristics” that are constantly manipulated. Thus, in *Eight Cousins*, despite Phebe’s natural goodness, her ability to sing better than her mistress Rose, and Uncle Alec praising her to Rose—“I want you to grow as fine a girl as Phebe” (51), she will belong to a

lower class than Rose. Both Rose and Phebe's social class is determined and defined by the power relations between the two, placing Phebe below Rose. Phebe's better qualities, talents, and manner somehow get manipulated to place her below Rose. Such a problematic and complicated construction of class continues to impact orphan fiction and non-fiction.

Bourdieu claims that how one chooses to present one's social space to the world—one's aesthetic dispositions—depicts one's status and distances oneself from lower groups. Specifically, Bourdieu hypothesizes that these dispositions are internalized at an early age and guide the young towards their appropriate social positions, towards the behaviors that are class appropriate, and an aversion towards other behaviors. Bourdieu theorizes that awareness of class differences teach aesthetic preferences to young people. Society incorporates "symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, [...as] the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction" (*Distinction* 59). These traits are then used to manipulate class in favor of certain groups and against others. The parent's absence invests powerful citizens the power to define and classify orphanhood on the basis of strict class lines, which can be bent in some special cases. In this exercise, orphanhood becomes a site for society's search for a scapegoat for all its ill. The powerless orphans of the lower classes in general and working class immigrants in particular are projected as society's eye sore. The presence or absence of the specific traits was so deeply entrenched in both the orphans' psyche and in society that they were very often internalized by the orphans. Phebe Moore, the little orphan maid from the poorhouse in Alcott's *Eight Cousins* is an example of such internalization. Alcott illustrates Phebe's unquestioned acceptance of her marginal position in the New England society of Cosey Corner by juxtaposing her portrayal with that of Rose Campbell, the upper class orphan protagonist of the novel, who seems to have taken a liking for poor Phebe. Rose is a thirteen year old girl who finds no fun in

her life. When the novel begins, she is presented as an insipid character, with no interest in anything except Phebe, immediately establishing her as superior to Phebe, because “Phebe is sensible, I’m sure, and I like her, though I only saw her yesterday” (29). Rose’s affection for Phebe qualifies her as good hearted, and places her in a position of power over the poor Phebe. Similarly, many fictional and non-fictional accounts of orphans’ lives in post-bellum America uphold the power of the middle and upper class orphans over those belonging to the lower classes.

Despite attempts to categorize them, orphans’ often mimic societal manipulations and try to manipulate people who try to restrict them to a group. Interpreting class as non-prescriptive, orphans, especially working class orphans, form a class of street smart, savvy young children who strive to transcend class barriers. Nineteenth-century society projected the orphans, mostly the very poor ones, as exemplars, both good and bad, for other children. While the lack of adult supervision was a cause for a general concern, their grit, independence, and resilience to persevere through hardships were often lauded. Even their worst critic, Brace, had a word of praise for them: “sharp, ready, lighthearted, quick to understand and quick to act, generous and impulsive and with an air of being well used ‘to steer their own canoe’ through whatever rapids and whirlpools” (344). Being very well aware of social stereotypes about them, which they sometimes used to their own advantage, working class orphans often worked hard to transcend class barriers. In his memoir, *A Voice from the Newsboys (1860)*, John Morrow’s account of his life proves that such children, very aware of their social class in New York City, thwart middle class attempts to impede their social ascent. Morrow seeks education as a means of social mobility, an attempt which illustrates his class consciousness, and simultaneously draws attention to his desire to transcend the limiting boundaries of working class life, thus confirming

his anathema towards his present class. Although his ability to identify the benefits of a middle-class life is situated in his knowledge of his current position as non-normative, Morrow's astute reading of social mobility in constant flux (rather than a static condition as the middle class reformers would expect the newsboys to believe) spurs him to work hard. In addition to educating himself, Morrow gradually moves away from his past, makes gainful friendship, and improves his condition. Morrow's upward mobility should be conceived "as an identity that is not only essentialized but worthy of celebration and affirmation" (Schocket 18). Thus, through dint of hard work, Morrow internalizes middle class notions of its own identity, and transcends the "dangerous class" of newsboys. Thus, class, for orphans is not as rigid as nineteenth-century society seemed to impose on them.

A strict notion of class identity enjoins society to view class based on certain attributes. A lack of good manners was often used to categorize orphans belonging to the dangerous classes. According to Bourdieu "'manner' is a symbolic manifestation whose meaning and value depend as much on the perceivers as on the producer, one can see how it is that the manner of using symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, constitutes one of the key markers of 'class' and also the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction" (*Distinction* 66). The middle class, in its zeal to create distinct social groups, categorizes itself as the "moral" class, thus presenting an essentialist notion of middle-class people as possessing good manners. The lower and the upper class were often depicted as lacking them. Although most of the narrative energy in fictional and non-fictional accounts of orphans was devoted to proving the worthlessness of orphans belonging to the lower classes, occasionally an upper class orphan would also be its victim. In *Little Women*, Alcott presents the March family as middle class and morally upright. Bereft of their father, who enlists in the army, and then mother for a brief period

of time in the narrative, the sisters experience metaphorical orphanhood. Although the March sisters have their own weaknesses and tend to err occasionally, they mostly exhibit good morals and manners, thereby confirming them as middle class. Their young neighbor, Laurie, an orphan living with his affluent grandfather, is initially presented as lazy and unappreciative of the chances available to him. His apathetic and indifferent outlook to life is contrasted with the March girls' enthusiasm and verve. In spite of their limited economic capital, they seem happy, while Laurie is depicted as melancholic and sulking. Alcott presents the rich orphan, Laurie, and Jo, as markedly different in temperament:

The solitary, hungry look in his eyes went straight to Jo's warm heart. She had been so simply taught that there was no nonsense in her head, and at fifteen she was as innocent and frank as any child. Laurie was sick and lonely, and feeling how rich she was in home and happiness, she gladly tried to share it with him. (50)

The affluent orphan, Laurie, is “sick and lonely,” while the middle class Jo is depicted as normative. In the second chapter, Alcott draws attention to the March girls' moral uprightness when they are willing to forfeit their Christmas breakfast to the cold and hungry Hummels:

“Not far away from here lies a poor woman with a little newborn baby. Six children are huddled into one bed to keep from freezing, for they have no fire. There is nothing to eat over there, and the oldest boy came to tell me they were suffering hunger and cold. My girls, will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?”

They were all unusually hungry, having waited nearly an hour, and for a minute no one spoke, only a minute, for Jo exclaimed impetuously, —

“I'm so glad you came before we began!

“May I go and help carry the things to the poor little children?” asked Beth eagerly.

“I shall take the cream and the muffins,” added Amy, heroically giving up the article she most liked.

Meg was already covering the buckwheats, and piling the bread into one big plate.

“I thought you'd do it,” said Mrs. March, smiling as if satisfied. “You shall all go and help me, and when we come back we will have bread and milk for breakfast, and make it up at dinnertime.” (14-15)

Orphans from different ends of the class spectrum are constantly set up against the normative middle-class child, orphan or not, who seems to have just the right amount of every virtue, while the rich or poor orphan is usually deficient.

Another attribute used to create distinctions in social class was knowledge or education. The term “knowledge” could be rather vague and misleading in its usage. While the street Arabs were quite knowledgeable in worldly matters, the notion of knowledge or education used to categorize class often relied on literacy, specifically the ability to read, write, compute, etc. Rice states, “Knowledge, then, both elevated those who possessed it and preserved social order. As a speaker before the Gloucester Mechanic Association put it in 1833, “Knowledge is not only power—knowledge is also safety. It is the stability of our times—our trust and stay amid dangers that thicken around us” (37). Knowledge was often tied to economic capital and chances in life. Although it was widely acknowledged as the main cause for the distinctions in society, acquiring it was often a luxury for working class orphans. For the fortunate few among them, winning a rich patron’s favor could open up the possibility of acquiring education. In *Eight Cousins*, Phoebe wins the favor of her orphan mistress, Rose, who convinces her guardian to offer Phebe the opportunity to educate herself, and rise economically and socially. Alcott describes how Uncle Alec was convinced:

Dr. Alec was evidently already won, for Rose had described the old slate and brown paper copy-book with pathetic effect, and the excellent man had not only decided to send Phebe to school long before the story was done, but reproached himself for forgetting his duty to one little girl in his love for another. So when Rose tried to look meek and failed utterly, he laughed and pinched her cheek, and answered in that genial way which adds such warmth and grace to any favor.

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Phebe is a brave, bright lass, and shall have a fair chance in the world, if we can give it to her, so that if she ever finds her friends they need not be ashamed of her. (226-227)



Orphans welcomed these “chances” and appreciated the goodness of the “moral and fortunate classes” for the opportunity. Such success stories were circulated through culture for the self-aggrandizement of the smug middle-class readers and circulated among the working class as well. Thus, it was fairly common for working class orphans to try in earnest to appease the upper and middle classes. In many fictional instances, the foundlings vied for attention by employing various techniques. In *Little Men*, Dan is introduced as one such orphan who is seeking a mentor. Alcott’s portrayal of Dan is in line with the middle-class view of such orphans. In spite of some occasional sparks of good behavior, Dan is doomed from the very outset of the novel. His first appearance in the novel is rather depressing:

“He’s a boy I used to know when I fiddled round the streets. He sold papers, and he was kind to me, and I saw him the other day in town, and told him how nice it was here, and he’s come.”

“But, my dear boy, that is rather a sudden way to pay a visit.”

“Oh, it isn’t a visit; he wants to stay if you will let him!” said Nat innocently.

“Well, I don’t know about that,” began Mrs. Bhaer, rather startled by the coolness of the proposition.

“Why, I thought you liked to have poor boys come and live with you, and be kind to ‘em as you were to me,” said Nat, looking surprised and alarmed.

“So I do, but I like to know something about them first. I have to choose them, because there are so many. I have not room for all. I wish I had.”

“I told him to come because I thought you’d like it, but if there isn’t room he can go away again,” said Nat, sorrowfully. (78)

This exchange between Jo and Nat reveals the middle-class pretension of being thoroughly moral, generous, and kind. Like Jo, Brace too desired to hold on to the reins of working class uplift. Neither Jo nor Brace want Nat and other working class orphans to dictate who to help and how. The middle-class control over the lives of working-class orphans is quite evident. Although Jo later complies and allows Nat to bring Dan to Plumfield, whose appearance discredits Nat’s judgment as Alcott writes:

Nat joyfully ran off, and soon returned followed by a most unprepossessing boy, who slouched in and stood looking about him, with a half bold, half sullen look, which made Mrs. Bhaer say to herself, after one glance,

“A bad specimen, I am afraid.” (79-80)

Jo was not the only one to think that Dan was “a bad specimen; everyone in Plumfield seemed to have a consensus on Dan’s worth. All the boys at Plumfield agreed with Jo’s judgement of Dan: “The boys had decided that they did not like him, and so they left him to Nat, who soon felt rather oppressed by the responsibility, but too kind-hearted to desert him” (83). Most of the boys at Plumfield were middle class orphans, except Dan. He represented the “dangerous class,” justifying Jo’s observation that he was “a bad specimen” (80). Not only Jo, even the other children exclude him from their activities. The boys “decided that they did not like him” at first glance which points to an aspect of his appearance that identified Dan instantly as “dangerous” or “a bad specimen”. Without interacting with him, the conclusion that he was not good seemed to have rested on his material existence. It was quite normal for such boys, without sufficient economic capital, to appear ragged and dirty. Thus, an orphan from the “dangerous” class would easily be considered “bad” even before they were given an opportunity to display knowledge or their actual nature. The physical conditions of Dan create class identification among the other boys at Plumfield signifying the role of economic capital.

The material conditions of lower class orphans to a large extent stymies any attempt at ascertaining their knowledge or nature. Social distinction was established first through material conditions of the different classes. Children, orphan or not, were well versed with the distinctions based on appearance. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Twain vividly unravels Tom’s understanding of class based on the distinctions between classes when Tom encounters a new boy:

A stranger was before him—a boy a shade larger than himself. A new comer of any age or either sex was an impressive curiosity in the poor little shabby village of St. Petersburg. This boy was well-dressed on a week-day. This was simply astounding. His cap was a dainty little thing, his close-buttoned blue cloth roundabout was new and natty, and so were his pantaloons. He had shoes on—and it was only Friday. He even wore a necktie, a bright bit of ribbon. He had a citified air about him that ate into Tom’s vitals. The more Tom stared at the splendid marvel, the higher he turned up his nose at his finery and the shabbier and shabbier his own outfit seemed to him to grow. Neither boy spoke. If one moved, the other moved—but only sideways, in a circle; they kept face to face and eye to eye all the time. (15)

Tom’s astute observation of the boy’s material condition immediately makes him aware of the boy’s class; thereby, presenting the boy as his class antagonist. Tom, in this case, with the shabby outfit, belonged to the middle-class. Thus, material conditions manifest themselves in the world of children in a way quite similar to adults. In his non-fictional account of the street children of New York, Brace details the material conditions of their lives. From the tenements they reside to the clothes they wear, every minute detail of these street children’ lives was documented and offered for consumption to the middle-class readers, resulting in the “reification ... [and] objectification of poverty” (Schocket 12). Eric Schocket adds that works like Brace’s “...Despite their political agendas, ... proceed from an identitarian understanding of class that subsequently prescribes an identitarian method of textual analysis and an inevitable set of conclusions” (17). The “set of inevitable conclusions” that are drawn of these street children mostly pertain to their deficiencies, which are highlighted in order to justify their exclusion from society.

Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, both were Twain’s orphans, but their class is defined through Tom’s cultural capital, his knowledge of the books of chivalry, as opposed to Huck’s complete lack of any cultural capital. Although Huck Finn belonged to the “dangerous classes,” his coming into money at the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* could have helped him gain access to the middle class. The economic capital he comes into possession combined with

Widow Douglas's intention to 'sivilize' him could have easily helped him to acquire cultural, symbolic, and social capital, but he gives up the opportunity to climb the social ladder. Although most orphans appropriated the notion of worldly success and craved the opportunity Huck received, Huck simply shucks everything off, a flagrant violation of social reality of constructing groups and compartmentalizing humans. Orphans like Huck are dreaded as they aim to dismantle the manipulations and negotiations of social groups. He even disregards the slave-owning society's self-presentation of whites as superior and blacks as inferior. Having escaped 'socialization' in traditional nineteenth-century terms and completely disregarding society's desire to socialize him, Huck established a relationship with a fugitive slave, knowing fully well that this would not help him acquire social capital. Twain subverts nineteenth-century America's construction and manipulation of different classes through Huck's portrayal in the novel. Unlike Huck, the normative Tom Sawyer conforms to society's norms, acquires economic and cultural capital (his repertoire of chivalric novels), and settles to a very class based livelihood. In Huck's escape to the wilderness with Jim, Twain flouts the traditional rite of passage novels that were used to vicariously socialize children:

The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given, or even a social given, constituted once and for all by an initial act of institution, represented, in the case of the family group, by the genealogical definition of kinship relations, which is the characteristic of a social formation. It is the product of an endless effort at institution, of which institution rites – often wrongly described as rites of passage – mark the essential moments and which is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits ("Forms of Capital" 87).

Instead of forging meaningful and productive relationships with people who matter to acquire social capital, Huck prefers to develop a lasting relationship with a fleeing slave, committing to his freedom, knowing fully well its social consequences. Twain's portrayal of Huck is an attempt to critique the strict socially inscribed norm of growing up in a certain manner, and forging

relationships with productive people. By doing the obverse, Huck sets himself up as a retrograde. He exhibits agency in rewriting his own life, and not allowing social formation of class to determine his life. He doesn't allow the society's strategy of condescension to dictate his life.

Class in postbellum America is very carefully defined by the emerging middle-class in a manner in which it projects itself as the upholder of all good virtues while the lower classes are presented as the possessing all the vices. Such an understanding becomes especially problematic when it is applied on orphans, but their innate resilience spurs them to improve their social condition and climb the social ladder. Although most orphans tend to view the class demarcations as essential and work towards the goal of acquiring the necessary capital to improve their condition, some, like Huck Finn, reject the social control that is applied on them by refusing to follow the class definitions.

## “Maybe I Am, Maybe I Ain't”: Orphans in Postbellum America and the Androgynous

### Ideal

Although Postbellum American writers, both male and female, constructed strict gendered identities for their readers, a conscious awareness of the androgynous ideal still looms over the American literary tradition, especially in some works about orphans. Despite the bifurcation of American literature into gendered writing that resulted in the bad boy and the orphan girl genre as distinct,<sup>40</sup> strict gender codes are blurred in favor of gender ambiguity. Although male anxiety of the changing role of women in an industrial society was responsible for the divide, Louisa M. Alcott's *Little Women* and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* challenge and counter the impetus to segregate literature on gender lines by their literary depiction of the androgynous ideal. Alcott's Jo and Laurie and Twain's Huck and Jim characterize their writers' androgynous vision. This chapter situates postbellum anxiety of gender bending as the cause for the gendered bifurcation of postbellum writing about orphans; it simultaneously charts a history of androgyny and identifies the presence of the androgynous ideal in Alcott's *Little Women* and Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In doing so, this chapter examines Alcott's *The Old-Fashioned Girl* (1869), *Little Women* (1868), *Little Men* (1871), and *Jo's Boys* (1886) Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1870), Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).

The construction of boyhood and girlhood in postbellum novels as distinct is not independent of the major shifts in American literature; in fact, it is engendered by it. While men were positioned outdoors, American culture relegated women inside the house. The cult of

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<sup>40</sup> In *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*, Beverly L. Clark points out how the bifurcation in literature on gender lines spurred the separation of children's book on gender lines, too.

republican motherhood placed onus on women to fulfil moral and domestic obligations and allowed men to roam in the wilderness. According to Leslie Fiedler, canonical American novels, mostly written by men, exemplified the male protagonists' "dream of escape from sex, marriage, and social responsibility" (vi)<sup>41</sup>, but in the mid-century, women writers enter the scene, and "the legend of a moral struggle ending in the moral dominance of woman informs the literature which makes the mass mind of America" (90). He goes on to add that "In this country the only class war is between the sexes" (90). Thus, the clash of the sexes results in the bifurcation of postbellum American fiction on gendered lines. In the antebellum, sentimental or domestic fiction popularized by women writer usually constituted a romantic plot of the heroine marrying and participating in nation building. Although sentimental fiction was very popular and well-received, it was later discredited by turn of the century literary critics like Henry James.<sup>42</sup> Chagrined by the overwhelming success of women writers, male writers tried to establish the superiority of male writing through novels that celebrated the male American identity. Although male writers' anxiety over women's writing existed even before the Civil War—Hawthorne expressed his indignation at the popularity and success of the women writers by calling them "the damned mob of scribbling women"—the clash between the male and female writers came to a head in postbellum America. Male writers used their talents to counteract women's writing which resulted in a gendered literary discourse. Drawing inspiration from their mid-century sisters, postbellum women writers undertook a revision of the sentimental fiction to create the

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<sup>41</sup> Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*, considered a seminal work in the study of nineteenth-century American literature has shaped critical reception of many literary works and how American Literature has been approached.

<sup>42</sup> In *Kiddie Lit: Cultural Constructions of Children's Literature in America*, Beverly Lyon Clark argues that although sentimental works by women were quite popular among the nineteenth century reading public, literary critics like William Dean Howells and Henry James changed the tide of literary criticism by denouncing sentimental literature and celebrated realism.

classic orphan girl novels.<sup>43</sup> Although the gendered nature of the literary tradition was also a result of the rise in print capitalism, it was mostly an outcome of the male writer's anxiety of the female writer's dominance over the traditionally male domain of writing that spurred the bifurcation in literature. This construction of men and women as distinct entities in the gendered literary scene impacts the construction of girls and boys within literature in a similar fashion (Fiedler vi). The genre of the bad boy book was born after the Civil War, which depicted "the boy-savage" (Kidd), as "bad good boy" (Fiedler). The use of this oxymoron ("bad good boy") to describe a boy reveals the transition in notions of boyhood that become engrained in the American cultural consciousness. The first bad boy book, Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy*, lays down the conventions of the genre. Serialized by Ticknor and Fields in 1869, it was published in book form the following year and was very well received. Aldrich's semi-autobiography is a nostalgic journey into his youth in antebellum days. It begins in a dramatic manner with the adult narrator reminiscing about his childhood:

I call my story the story of a bad boy, partly to distinguish myself from those faultless young gentlemen who generally figure in narratives of this kind, and partly because I really was not a cherub. I may truthfully say I was an amiable, impulsive lad, blessed with fine digestive powers, and no hypocrite. I didn't want to be an angel and with the angels stand; I didn't think the missionary tracts presented to me by the Rev. Wibird Hawkins were half so nice as Robinson Crusoe; and I didn't send my little pocket-money to the natives of the Feejee Islands, but spent it royally in peppermint-drops and taffy candy. In short, I was a real human boy, such as you may meet anywhere in New England, and no more like the impossible boy in a storybook than a sound orange is like one that has been sucked dry. But let us begin at the beginning. (1)

As Aldrich's narrator recounts the story of his childhood, he brings it to the reader's attention that he was not the model good boy, rather a real human boy. Cohoon claims that *The Story of a*

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<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Kidd's *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale* looks back at the history of culture criticism and the gendered bifurcation of American Literature and Children's Literature. He continues Clark's argument that distinct genres were created in postbellum American writing to reinforce gender in society. In addition, Joe Sutliff, in *Disciplining Girls*, mentions how sentimental writing was revised to form the classic orphan girl's story.



*Bad Boy* constructs a notion of boyhood as bad, a notion that is linked inextricably to an overall notion of American male identity as distinct (10). Aldrich's literary influence in the postbellum is significant; other American writers followed his example reinforced gender bifurcation through their writing.

Although Alcott is mostly considered to be a writer of the girl's book, she blends the girl's book and the bad boy genre in most of her works. In *An Old Fashioned Girl*, Alcott incorporates some elements of the bad boy book. Though the novel focuses on Polly Milton, "a good good girl," Alcott characterizes Tom Shaw based on Tom Bailey—interestingly, three of the bad boys of American literature, with the exception of Huck Finn, share the same first name. Tom Shaw enjoys playing pranks on his sisters, is often referred to as a 'bear' in the narrative, foreshadowing his bear-like nature expressed through the innate goodness of his heart as opposed to his rough exterior. While initially Tom Shaw is presented as careless, when the family experiences a reversal of fortune he moves west to earn his living and build his own fortune. Tom Bailey, Tom Shaw, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn illustrate a love for the wilderness, a desire to move away from society and civilization. According to Beverly Lyon Clark, these bad boy books at the beginning dramatize the child protagonists' impulse to move away from civilization toward nature. While this desire or wish of the child is often seen as atavistic, the writers very carefully steer these protagonists back into civilization (Clark 7). Thus, the bad boy book served as a handmaiden to the dominant bourgeois ideology of those times in subjecting the individual to its dictates by retaining their affinity to society and at the same time creating gender consciousness with an eye to profit from the bifurcated literary tradition. Although Alcott, like Aldrich, also constructs separate gender identities for children, but unlike the male writers, she blends the gendered genres possibly to thwart the various attempts to

separate them. Simultaneously challenging and reinforcing the cult of republican womanhood, Alcott asserted her heroines' presence in matters beyond the home. Both Polly and Jo push societal limits to pursue careers as teachers, but also bow down before social expectations by settling down as responsible mothers. Like Jo in *Little Women*, many women took up writing as a profession and gained success and popularity. These women writers of sentimental fiction in the mid-century become potent forces in the writing profession. Their heroines challenge the strict gendered codes and push gender boundaries by stepping out and seeking public roles. Alcott's Jo is tomboyish, enjoys the company of boys and wishes to contribute to the family. She belies the traditional portrayal of girls in those times. Alcott presents Jo as distinct from expectations of girlhood in postbellum America. Although Alcott's portrayal of Jo is commendable, her portrayal of Laurie, Jo's orphan counterpart, as a sissy is even more interesting. Laurie's portrayal problematizes the bad boys of the bad boy fiction. Alcott counters the popularity of the bad boy books by creating a sissy, and as I argue later, in her portrayal of Laurie and Jo, Alcott embodies her androgynous ideal. Similarly, Twain's portrayal of Huck and Jim fulfills a similar androgynous vision. In both the pairings, postbellum America's anxiety of gender bending is dismissed, and the possibility of androgyny is presented as viable.

While the classic orphan girl stories were produced as women writer's reacted against the hegemonic male imagination, the bad boy genre's genesis lay in the anxiety about androgyny and women entering the literary fray. Not surprisingly, both genres' protagonists were orphan girls and boys whose marginalized position in society thrust them on relatives, friends or government for sustenance. Faced with such deprivation, and the absence of parents to enforce gender roles, the orphan's gender consciousness or the possible lack of it become a key site of society's anxiety and intervention. Although nineteenth-century American society imposed strict

gender codes on all children, the amphibious nature of all orphans, irrespective of gender, class or race, resembled the position of women and emancipated slaves in nineteenth-century America. Hence, many orphan boys were forced to supplicate and appease relatives and prospective guardians, thus displaying traits considered feminine. On the other hand, female orphans exhibited male attributes like extraordinary courage and bravery in order to survive. Often, orphans resisted strict gendered identities that were imposed on other children. Paradoxically, in spite of society's attempt to construct gender binaries, these same orphans were often hailed for their ambivalent gender positions. The absence of authority figures like parents or relatives to impose strict gendered traits made it possible for orphans to combine gender traits of both the sexes. In Alcott's *Little Men*, Dan, a rugged adolescent who has been in many scrapes befitting a bad boy, has to beseech Jo to allow him to stay in Plumfield. Alcott reveals Dan's feminine side when he develops affection for Jo's baby, Teddy. Likewise, in *Eight Cousins*, Alcott portrays Rose, a thirteen year old affluent orphan girl, as boisterous as any boy. Similarly, Twain's characterization of Huck in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* illustrates the orphan's ability to adapt new personas, even of the opposite gender, for survival.

Orphans posed the biggest threat to society's anxiety about the blurring of gender lines. While women writers explored androgyny throughout the nineteenth century, the bad boy books were infused with strict gender codes of what constituted male attributes in nineteenth century contexts. Although both types of fictions were aimed at hetero-normative middle-class children, they often offered conflicting notions of gender categories to their intended readers, condemning and hailing gender bending at the same time. Strict gendered divisions in literature helped shape gendered identities, but despite such attempts, some literary texts slip through to celebrate the utopian possibilities of androgyny.

Before delving into a detailed discussion on androgyny, a brief overview of major critical works in the field that impacted and shaped literary studies would be useful. Foremost is Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel*, which elucidates the recurring theme of love and death in the traditionally male American novels where the protagonist seems to escape civilization and domesticity, hence women, into either the forest or sea.<sup>44</sup> Through a "strategy of evasion," these male characters retreat into the wilderness can be construed as an escape into childhood, more specifically boyhood; hence, conflating boyhood and wilderness to give readers a sense of the apparent roguishness in the American boy. In yet another pioneering work, *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale*, Kenneth Kidd suggests that boyology,<sup>45</sup> or the bad boy genre is a uniquely American genre created by male writers and critics like Henry James and Fiedler to establish a form of culture criticism which prioritized boy books over domestic fiction written by women, even though bad boy genre borrowed from and shared many qualities with domestic fiction. Kidd further points out that advice literature for both boys and girls were quite popular in the antebellum years, "Boyology went literary in the postbellum era, flourishing most visibly as the so-called Bad Book genre" (27), and "is routinely asserted against the sentimental didacticism of women writers" (33). Echoing the ideas of Kidd, Clark looks at the changing fate of the works of many prominent male and female writers at the turn of the century.<sup>46</sup> She highlights two pairs of writers: Twain and Alcott, and Henry James and Frances Hodgson

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<sup>44</sup> As discussed earlier, Fiedler's central premise is that the American canon consists of novels that focus on love and death. He adds that the men in these novels seem to be on the run from women, and that the quintessential American novel focusses on male camaraderie.

<sup>45</sup> Continuing with Fiedler's premise, Kidd espouses the idea that boyology is central to the American literary psyche. The impetus to separate from any feminine attributes spurred male writers and that created boyology, but the works of these male writers and culture critics were essentially not very different from the sentimental or domestic fiction popularized by women.

<sup>46</sup> Fiedler, Kidd, and Clark seem to be discussing the same point that a very conscious effort was put to separate the writing that was produced in the nineteenth century.

Burnett. Surveying the reception of the works of these writers through the nineteenth and twentieth century, Clark notes that although both the female writers were quite popular among their immediate readers, their literary fate diminished with the turn of the century. Like Kidd, she too attributes this sudden change in literary merit to the growing body of male critics who consciously created a literary environment conducive to male writers. In spite of these efforts, mostly by men to deny women writers the success they deserved, some orphan fiction, broadly defined to include stories of male and female orphans, explored the forbidden desire to be androgynous. An orphan, free of adult control and supervision, always inhabits a liminal or androgynous space in terms of gender until it is forced by societal pressure to display specific gender traits. In these texts, the author's subtle manipulations of gender force gender traits on the orphan child.

The notion of androgyny has existed simultaneously with and in conflict with notions of gender. It has pervaded every century becoming more pronounced in the nineteenth-century, especially after the Civil War. Although for the most part in history, male philosophers and writers explored the notion and considered it a viable third option to a gendered society, the Feminist movement's appropriation of the term reduced it to a pejorative, restricting its meaning to a feminine desire to transcend femininity by embracing male attributes and habits. In *Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality*, June Singer opines, "The recent expansion of androgynous consciousness, brought about largely through the catalytic effect of the Women's Movement, has increased our awareness of our necessity for questioning the nearly impregnable fortress of male-oriented values" (22). When used by male writers and philosophers, the word implied utopian possibilities, transcending the limited confines of the two genders, but

androgyny lost its potency when used by women primarily due to male anxiety and mistrust of anything women took on.

Historically, androgyny or the androgynous ideal offered a state of “wholeness or wholesomeness” to life. Singer defines androgyny thus: “Androgyny refers to a specific way of joining the “masculine” and “feminine” aspects of a single human being” (22). Being a woman, Singer’s definition of androgyny evokes ideas expressed by some famous male writers who have defined androgyny similarly. Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, was among the first to explore the concept and define it. In *Symposium*,<sup>47</sup> Plato lays down the mythic dimensions of the two genders. According to his myth, Zeus created Man, Woman, and Man-Woman corresponding with homosexuality, lesbianism, and heterosexuality. Androgyny implied a Man-woman union or the heteronormative sexuality of our times. Some have interpreted Plato’s Man-Woman to stand for hermaphrodites too. Plato’s mythic tale influenced many literary talents who have borrowed and redefined the Man-woman union as they saw it useful. While discussion of androgyny was not rare in Renaissance England, it was the Romantic poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Blake who explored the term from a purely psychic angle. Their androgynous vision explored and extolled the possibility of men attaining wholeness by combining both masculine and feminine attributes of the mind. Such an exploration presupposes the limits of masculinity and attaches value to femininity. Coleridge, one of the most famous proponents of androgyny, wrote, “The truth is, a great mind must be androgynous” (*Table Talk*), which implies a “reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities” (*Biographia Literaria* 174).

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<sup>47</sup> Plato uses Aristophanes as his mouthpiece to present androgyny as a viable third option.

Clearly, Coleridge envisioned the benefits of a coming together of masculine and feminine qualities. Elaborating Coleridge's notion of psychic androgyny, James McGavran writes:

Coleridge felt a life-long attraction to the ideal of psychic androgyny: that is, the concept that creativity in human consciousness, as in nature and the life of the body, results not from the domination of matter by mind or of emotions by reason, but from a transforming synthesis of opposing but complementary—and thus figuratively masculine and feminine—elements. (59)

It is this notion of psychic androgyny that Virginia Woolf borrows from Coleridge and which later becomes the watchword of the Feminist movement. In doing so, Woolf inadvertently creates rancor in the literary arena when she writes:

The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. (ch 6)

Although Woolf retains Coleridge's definition, her definition of androgyny is couched in sexual terms, thus drawing much criticism. According to Woolf's interpretation of Coleridge's notion of androgyny, androgyny is a 'fusion'. Critics have waged a critical war over her choice of the word "fusion" rather than "balance". For Coleridge, androgyny is a "reconciliation of opposite qualities," which literary critics consider would be aptly described by the word "balance" not "fusion." The debate over Woolf's preference of "fusion" over "balance" is explained by Marilyn Farwell succinctly: "with fusion, the male is equated with the androgynous, but with balance, both male and female principles are considered valid" (440). She further adds that "because the universal is most often identified with whatever is male ... the female and all she symbolizes are excluded by being included" (440). Hence, when androgyny is evoked by patriarchal myths or male writers, inclusion of female attributes to the notion of androgyny is justified, but the practice of women co-opting the term becomes fraught with gender tensions.

Such denunciation of women's use of androgyny is partly due to male dominance of culture criticism and partly because angry feminists have narrowed the scope of the pronouncement by making it specific to the female gender, when Coleridge very cautiously phrased it to indicate any great mind, devoid of gender; even though his notion of a great mind was situated at a time when invariably the male mind was considered great. He may have implied merely the great minds of men, for literary history, at least in his times, was populated by more great men than women, but by carefully refraining from gender inflections, Coleridge's pronouncement becomes less ambivalent than feminists like Judith Butler and Hélène Cixous. As such, Coleridge's genuine desire to achieve androgyny of the mind came to be misrepresented by anti-feminists, as they relieved it of its original meaning.

While Coleridge's statement makes it a literary expedient for writers to possess androgyny, William Blake's androgynous vision is ascribed to his poetic creation, *Jerusalem* (1821), where he creates a visionary head to symbolize "the androgynous ego-ideal" (Hayes 143). *Jerusalem*, considered Blake's most dense and opaque poem, remained unappreciated by its contemporary readers, although twentieth-century readers and some literary critics, like Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom, heaped much critical attention and praise. Belonging to "traditional Christian typography,"<sup>48</sup> *Jerusalem* elucidates the scope of androgyny in the Judea-Christian tradition as essentially misogynistic; even then, "The uncanny "Visionary Head" drawing is symptomatic of his [Blake's] desire to refigure his subject position within the symbolic, to resist the imprisonment of a coherent identity" (Hayes 160). Blake's desire to escape the coherent identity does not imply a desire to escape his vision of androgyny, because

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<sup>48</sup> David G. Reide's article entitled "The Symbolism of the Loins in Blake's *Jerusalem*," explores how Blake represents androgyny through his visionary head. Reide's appraisal of *Jerusalem* offers a new understanding of Blake's interest in androgyny.



according to Diane Hoeveler, “For Blake the androgynous is a consciousness that is neither masculine nor feminine; rather, it is a distinct third psychic possibility in which neither sex predominates” (29). Hoeveler adds that Blake’s conflicting portrayal of the androgynous ideal and his poetic images of the hermaphrodite in *The Four Zoas* embody the “ensuing sexual warfare” in his times (30). Thus, Blake’s androgynous ideal is a celebration of the gender clash prevalent in his time.

Discussion of the androgynous ideal, mostly misogynist, continued to be an integral part of Western thought, not just literary endeavors, and became more pronounced in the last two centuries with interesting theories on gender and sexuality (terms that are often paired together), by psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustave Jung, Jacques Lacan, and Cixous entering the debate. For the purpose of this study Lacan and Cixous are more pertinent as both address (Lacan more so) many of the assertions made by Sigmund Freud pertaining to women. Although Freud’s ideas on female sexuality were formulated in the new century, Lacan points out that many of his ideas had its origin in perceptions held in society, he merely stated them in psychoanalytical terms later. Freud’s theories relied on broad assumptions of women’s nature and sexual predilections he borrowed from the Judea-Christian tradition, which he turned into scientific postulates. Questioning some of the scientific pretensions behind Freud’s ideas, Lacan’s theory underlines a triadic progression of human consciousness from birth to full maturation. In the first stage, referred to as the Mirror stage, a child, irrespective of its actual gender, identifies with the nurturing mother. Lacan’s term for this order is Imaginary, as it identifies itself with the image of the mother. This is followed by the second order, the Symbolic, which is associated with the masculine. In this stage, the child picks up symbols that define society, like laws and societal norms, which help a child split from the mother and understand its

own position in the world. According to Lacan, human fetuses are androgynous and sexual differentiation happens at birth; hence, a “lack [of sexual differentiation is] ... situated at the advent of the living being, that is to say, at sexed reproduction” (205). Sexual differentiation may be established at birth, but that doesn’t initiate a child into the gender codes that are imposed by society. Lacan’s contention points at the androgynous origin of all human beings. Only when a child outgrows the mirror stage and enters the Symbolic order does it begin to realize its similarity or difference in strictly gendered terms.

On the other hand, Cixous discusses centuries of masculine hegemony over philosophy and asserts that ‘fear of castration’ forces male psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud to dismiss the presence of feminine attributes in the male. Cixous writes, “Psychoanalysis is formed on the basis of women and repressed (not all successfully) the femininity of masculine sexuality” (41). In concert, her ideas on bisexuality co-opt androgyny. According to Cixous, there are two types of bisexualities, the first resembles the asexual androgyny that male philosophers and literary figures like Plato and Coleridge theorized, and the second type is her version of bisexuality, which opposes the notion of psychic androgyny. She avers,

Therefore, I shall distinguish between two bisexualities, two opposite ways of imagining the possibility and practice of bisexuality.

1. Bisexuality as a fantasy of a complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference insofar as this is perceived as the mark of a mythical separation—the trace, therefore, of a dangerous and painful ability to be cut. Ovid’s Hermaphrodite, less bisexual than asexual, not made up of two genders but of two halves. Hence, a fantasy of unity. Two within one, not even two wholes.
2. Bisexuality—that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the non-exclusion of difference or of a sex, and starting with this “permission” one gives oneself, the multiplication of the effects of desire’s inscription on every part of the body and the other body. (41)

Cixous' definition of bisexuality as the obverse of androgyny complicates it, but also underlines centuries of repression and attempts to make amends for such interventions in history. She boldly states,

I will say: today, writing is woman's. That is not a provocation, it means that women admits there is another. In her becoming-woman, she has not erased bisexuality latent in the girl as in the boy. Femininity and bisexuality go together, in a combination that varies according to the individual, spreading the intensity of its force differently, and (depending on the moments of their history) privileging one component or another. It is much harder for a man to let the other come through him. (42)

Cixous' ideas help understand nineteenth-century male writers predilection to resist the sissy and the dandy, due to this "fear of castration." Accusing Freud of misrepresenting the idea of the repressed, Cixous notes, "For Freud, the repressed is not the other sex defeated by the dominant sex, ... what is repressed is leaning toward one's own sex" (41). She further adds,

Each human being derives from male and female elements; thus, the true human personality is androgynous, that is, it contains both male and female or Masculine or Feminine traits...the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual ways, the non-exclusion of difference or of a sex. (41)

Although Cixous's bisexuality excludes men, her contention that human personality contains both feminine and masculine traits corroborates Coleridge and Lacan's pronouncements. For any discussion of androgyny, it becomes expedient to define the actual implications of the term so that we do not run the risk of essentializing it. As opposed to androgyny, bisexuality implies a sexual orientation, usually considered the third option in the scope of strict binaries of heterosexuality and/or homosexuality. More recently, with considerable studies on the topic, bisexuality gained credibility and has been included under Queer theory. Works by Michael du Plessis, Steven Angelides, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, have contributed to its further explication. For the most part androgyny implies a 'psychic' union of male and female characteristics in a human being; bisexuality is more rooted in sexuality. Since this chapter limits itself to orphans in

nineteenth-century American writing, it is incumbent that a discussion of the term concentrates on the asexual nature of the concept and focuses on the behavioral or psychological aspect of androgyny as Singer defines it: “a specific way of joining the “masculine” and “feminine” aspects of a single human being” (22). Such an understanding of androgyny cancels any attempt to conflate it with bisexuality, which may overlap androgyny, but is markedly different on account of its sexual nature. Singer warns us that “Bisexuality...refers to a psychological condition...to a lack of clarity in gender identification; that is, to confusion about masculinity or femininity” (30). Not surprisingly then that Freud equated overt homosexuality with bisexuality and also included latent homosexuality of heterosexuals within this category. Classically, however, bisexuality refers to people who select *both* male and female sexual partners (Singer 30-31).

Although androgyny was mostly imagined by writers as a desirable intellectual (and behavioral) state to be pursued, its latency was felt in nineteenth-century life. Its actual manifestation, gender bending, was quite common in nineteenth-century life. Sissies and tomboys proliferated in literature only to be reclaimed to their actual genders by parents and other relatives as we see happening with Jo in *Little Women*. The absence of adult supervision in an orphan makes the reclaiming particularly difficult. The word sissy’s origin lies in mid-nineteenth-century America:

The term, coined in the 1840s as an affectionate neologism for “sister,” began its conversion into an opprobrious label condemning fearful or unaggressive males -males who had not learned their distinctive courage and anger lessons-during the 1880s. By then, sissy simultaneously ridiculed males who could not live up to gender standards and those unable to muster appropriate emotional fervor. (Stearns 48)

As the number of boys who could be identified as a sissy increased, the definition became more specific. In addition to possessing many feminine attributes, sissies were considered deviants,

suffered social opprobrium, and “were frequently characterized as sickly, timid children who were overly dependent on their mothers” (Grant 829). The sissy’s inverse, the tomboy was also quite popular in nineteenth-century literary imagination, and the word may have had its provenance in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s portrayal of Topsy Turvy in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. As her name indicates, Topsy Turvy is the embodiment of perverse gender identity, and transcends her race to influence female writers of the classic orphan tale to portray tomboys as physically and emotionally stronger girls. In these fictions, tomboyism is not denounced as much as sissiness:

Emerging in the mid-nineteenth century as a product of growing concern over the deplorable state of health among middle- and upper-class white women, tomboyism was designed as an alternative. Not surprisingly, given this purpose, narratives that were intended for a largely female readership, featured young girls as protagonists and were written by women were among the first to feature tomboys. (Abate xv)

Initially, tomboyism was essential to the cult of true womanhood. Only physically strong women capable of doing household chores and bringing up children could raise a nation of strong individuals. Hence, it was even encouraged in the formative years of a girl’s life as Alcott illustrates in *Little Women*. Alcott’s narrative informs us that Jo (short for Josephine but an appropriate name for a tomboy) and her mother were both tomboys initially. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Toqueville heaps praise on American women who were strong like men and “often exhibit a masculine strength of understanding and a manly energy,” yet “always retain the manners of women although they sometimes show that they have the hearts and minds of men” (1064).

While sissies were condemned, tomboys’ male traits were somehow viewed as a stepping up for girls. Postbellum America conceptualized a tomboy as a healthy spritely girl, busy conducting her daily activities with much zeal, but with the population of tomboys and sissies increasing, both posed a threat to gender codes and were considered sexual deviants in need of intervention

and correction. Even then, nineteenth-century tomboys exhibited more agency than sissies, who were ridiculed by everyone.

While tomboyism as a concept and a cultural phenomenon may date back to the Renaissance era in England, it did not become prevalent in the United States until three centuries later. Adolescent girls and adult women who engaged in behavior that could be characterized as tomboyish certainly existed in American literature and culture prior to this period. As Michelle Abate clarifies:

From the hearty women who traversed the Atlantic for a new life in the colonies during the sixteenth century to those who moved Westward during the early days of the republic, strong, gender-defiant women have been a longstanding hallmark of the United States. Nevertheless, these individuals neither considered themselves nor were labelled by others as “tomboys”. The term, along with its underlying premise that physically active women constituted their own distinct category, is simply absent in writings from early America. (xiv).

In tracing the history of the word “tomboy,” Abate points to its first use in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which denoted “A rude , boisterous or forward boy” (211), but later implied “a girl who behaves like a spirited or boisterous boy; a wild romping girl; a hoyden” (*OED* 212). The change in meaning from a word denoting an impudent boy to a wild girl was largely due to the popularity of tomboys. Abate also informs us that “the years from the end of the Civil War to the middle of the Depression Era” was the “golden era” of literary tomboyism” in response to the actual changes in the real world (xv). The Civil War caused many upheavals in America’s social fabric. Women played an important role outside the home, and started taking responsibilities that were earlier considered a male prerogative. Furthermore, Abate points out that the rise of tomboyism in literature and in real life during and after the Civil War was a reaction against the cult of True Womanhood: “Alcott consistently rejected True Womanhood in favor of tomboyhood. As the future author would recall later in life, “No boy could be my friend until I

had beaten him in a race, and no girl if she refused to climb trees, leap fences and be a tomboy' (Alcotts *Life 20*)" (26). Alcott's notion of tomboyism may sound very liberating, but it should also be noted that in her portrayal of Jo in *Little Women*, tomboyism is presented as an intermediate step to be a woman. Jo's boyish urges are tamed in the novel with frequent consultation from her mother, who confessed her own tomboyish nature. Thus, tomboyism was a cultural phenomenon which was to be first practiced and later renounced, and strict gender identity was thus restored.

Even though gender bending was popular, it was also regarded as an anomaly that needed correction. While women writers used tomboyism as a literary trope in their coming of age classic orphan girl's stories, most male writers took it upon themselves to rid society of the gender confusion that resulted in sissies. Hence, the impetus to establish the bad boy genre that helped reaffirm, reinforce and mimic strict gender roles and behavior. As sissies and tomboys grew in numbers, so did the number of bad boy books with the clear motive of creating strict gender boundaries that could be emulated by young readers. Twain's bad boy books, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) follow the genre conventions established by Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy*, albeit with a few improvisations. His novels depict the adolescent heroes, their social statuses, and their outcomes differently from Aldrich, especially in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Although like Aldrich's novel both the novels were published and became popular in postbellum America, the narratives recount the life of Tom and Huck in retrospect, hence, placing its textual history in antebellum America, with slavery being an integral part of Southern life. Twain deploys androgynous attributes in Huck as opposed to Tom's quintessential bad boy portrayal. Although most Twain scholars would place *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the bad boy genre, Twain subverts the very purpose of the

bad boy genre in presenting Huck as his androgynous vision, to simultaneously reinforce and denounce bad boy qualities. Huck Finn combines the attributes of the boisterous boys with those of the heroines of the classic orphan narratives. That *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is not a pure bad boy book is evident in its various manipulations of the genre. Huck's numerous pranks and bad boy pretensions, qualities he picks up from Tom, become insignificant when his moral self-questionings pertaining to Jim are revealed. Huck's nature is strikingly different from Tom's, Huck is quick to empathize with the downtrodden, victims of selfishness, and the suffering. Twain's different portrayals of Huck and Tom establishes the bad boy Tom as heteronormative, while Huck's social status of the town pariah characterizes Huck as a bad boy and more. Many scholars have acquiesced that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is framed as a bad boy book. The beginning and ending of the novel is true to the bad boy genre, but in the middle section, Twain diverts the plot to present his androgynous vision of Huck and Jim, escaping from civilization and interacting with both women and men, to explore the possibility of an alternate world. This world is presented as close to nature, in the river Mississippi, where they explore the possibility of a world without the clash of the genders. According to Alan Gribben, Twain carefully manipulated the established genre of the bad boy books by structurally making *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* more complex. Pointing out the various aspects of the novel that distinguishes it from the bad boy genre, Gribben establishes *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as far superior:

It might be said that in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain set out to write another conventional Boy Book but his experiences and reading--and above all, his literary imagination--got the better of him, and the book veered away from generic formulas to become something even more vital and inspiring--a combination of voice and place and event that has moved and challenged writers and readers ever since. (21)



If Fiedler intended to subsume American novels under the recurring theme of the male protagonist perpetually running away from civilization and women (thus domesticity), Huck Finn resists such attempts. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck expresses a disgust for female and male company; he doesn't just resist "Miss Watson [as] she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome" but he finds pap, the Duke and the King revolting as well. Tom, whose company he seemed to enjoy in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and at the beginning of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, also annoys him at the end. Edward H. Cady corroborates this idea,

On the one hand, back with his Pap Huck could find things "lazy and jolly" and "pretty good times up there in the woods"; on the other, he scarcely got away with his life. If the counter and opposite to "civilization" were taken to be Pap, there would be much to say for town, school, and the Widow. Easy boy-life evading the cramps of civilization was one thing; real life with a real picaro was something else. Huck opted out and skipped out on both, "murdering" himself and running and hiding to drop even below the bum's level, clean out of sight and legal being. He became technically a nonperson for the duration of the long, central section of the novel. (388)

According to Cady's analysis, in the long central section of the novel, Huck becomes "technically a nonperson," as he and Jim form "a community of saints." Like Blake, Twain seems to be critiquing the gender war of his times as he and Jim escape the constricting confines of St. Petersburg. Twain's androgynous vision, akin to Blake's, is a desire for a psychic androgyny, where Huck experiences psychic androgyny as he transcends his masculine gender to embrace other people, suffers with them, and helps them when they are in trouble. Unlike the bad boys in the bad boy books, Huck's journey transcends the rite of passage narratives that bad boy books adhere to. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* becomes an exploration into the unknown waters of river Mississippi, as it becomes a symbolic journey into the self, shorn of the limited underpinnings of gender. It is not surprising then that the only company he seems to tolerate was Jim, the feminized racial other, as the African male slave was often portrayed in nineteenth-

century literature. If Jim's portrayal is carefully analyzed, it becomes evident that Twain envisioned Jim as his androgynous ideal, and in his company and influence, Huck undergoes a willful transition from a rogue to an androgyne, sympathetic to the sufferings of the meek, irrespective of their gender identity.

Both in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck is presented as an outsider in the boy's gang from the outset. He questions Tom's fantastical stories. Tom, the apotheosis of the bad boy of nineteenth-century American culture with a rich repertoire of all the popular tales of bravery, seemed to have an obsession for a distinct identity for himself as a roguish boy. On the other hand, Huck, an orphan unexposed to such books, questioned Tom's narratives. Although T. S. Eliot wants us to believe that Huck idolized and admired Tom, even he notices the subtle difference in their portrayal:

Huck's persisting admiration for Tom only exhibits more clearly to our eyes the unique qualities of the former and the commonplaces of the latter. Tom has the imagination of a lively boy who has read a good deal of romantic fiction: he might, of course, become a writer—he might become Mark Twain. Or rather, he might become the more commonplace aspect of Mark Twain. Huck has not imagination, in the sense in which Tom has it: he has, instead, vision. He sees the real world, and he does not judge it—he allows it to judge itself. (*Norton* 329)

According to Eliot, Huck has a vision, which Twain's portrayal of Tom lacks. Tom is limited in his outlook because he lives a very "commonplace" life. He might have imagination, derived from the books he has devoured, but he lacks vision. In portraying Huck, Twain transcends the limits of his own creative imagination to explore new territory. Even if readers fail to interpret the textual cues Twain offers, Huck's pronouncement in the third chapter, "but as for me I think different" (*HF*17) establishes his difference from Tom quite early in the narrative. The Huck who played side kick to Tom in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* informs us that he "thinks different" and should not be expected to imitate Tom. Having established Huck's control over

the narrative, Twain reveals the stupidity of Tom's imagination, and clearly presents Huck as more sane. Huck not only rejects the boyish adventures of Tom and presents them as jejune; he also rejects the masculine world of lynchings, killings, and feuds that were commonplace in antebellum America. While Huck's rejection of Pap can be explained on the privation of a life with his wastrel father, Huck rejects the masculine life both Tom and Pap symbolize when he runs away from the kind of "manly" life of feuds lived by the aristocrats. His journey is a repudiation of society, both male and female, lived on the basis of the constricted gender codes. While Jim's paternal role cannot be denied, he is not only a father figure to Huck, but he is a mother as well: "As both father and mother—an androgynous figure—Jim fills the void left by Huck's missing parents and teachers Huck rejects in the end" (Wasserstein 31). Jim has "the warmth, the compassion, the strong ethical sense, and the ability to love and to teach about love that characterizes nineteenth-century America's views of the ideal woman and the mother" (Wasserstein 31). His love for his children and his nobility when he refuses to desert the injured Tom, all point to the beautiful amalgamation of the psychic elements of both the genders. It is incumbent on Huck, who has imbibed these traits from Jim, to display similar characteristics. Furthermore, when Huck finds it necessary to go into disguise, Jim is the one who suggests that "he dress up like a girl" (Wasserstein 47). That the idea for sexual disguise comes from Jim suggests, among other things, that Huck's disguise is a reflection of Jim's own androgyny" (Wasserstein 32). Jim's androgyny combines the best qualities of both genders. Huck can explore androgyny because the strict gender codes have failed to impress him, as Mathews says,

The contrast between Tom Sawyer, who is the child of respectable parents, decently brought up, and Huckleberry Finn, who is the child of the town drunkard, not brought up at all, is made distinct by a hundred artistic touches, not the least natural of which is Huck's constant reference to Tom as his ideal of what a boy should be. (293)

When Huck stops following the dictates of society, Tom ceases to be his ideal. Jim's androgyny defines and influences Huck's own notion of identity, as Jim was possibly the best role model for Huck. As social outcasts, Huck and Jim influence each other as the raft explores the possibility of an alternate world, driven neither by feminine impulses, nor male ones.

Similarly, Alcott's trilogy *Little Women*, *Little Men*, and *Jo's Boys* also explore the androgynous ideal. Unlike most male writers, Alcott's novels were mostly written to discipline both girls and boys. Although most literary critics highlight her portrayal of strong-minded women and dismiss her characterization of boys as weak when compared to the bad boys, Alcott was equally concerned in portraying the problems faced by both boys and girls in postbellum America as the title of the three books make it evident. In *Little Women* and its sequels, she depicts various types of boys, ranging from the upper class Laurie to the working class Dan. Alcott's portrayal of boys is more diverse and real than their stock portrayals in the bad boy genre. It is understandable that most of the bad boy books were written with the exclusive purpose of defining boyhood in strongly masculine terms revealing the writers' anxiety of the emasculation of boys in post-Civil War America. Free from such anxiety, Alcott's boy characters are more compelling. As mentioned earlier, the narrative in *The Old-Fashioned Girl* blends the classic orphan girl story and the bad boy book. Published in 1869, a year before Aldrich's *The Story of the Bad Boy*, it is clear that Alcott was not influenced by Aldrich, but Alcott's literary acumen is commendable even though *The Old-Fashioned Girl* did not gain much popularity.

In *Little Women*, Alcott's compelling portrayal of both a sissy and a tomboy as friends is a departure from the gendered genres of postbellum America. In creating Laurie and Jo, Alcott envisions the androgynous ideal. While Laurie is an orphan living with his grandfather, Jo has both her parents in the narrative, albeit for a short duration in the novel the March sisters are

orphaned when their mother visits their ailing father in a hospital. Both Jo and Laurie do not conform to strict gender roles; Jo is depicted as a tomboy while Laurie is a sissy. Regarding the friendship between tomboys and sissies, Abate points out, that “tomboys often help masculinize effeminate boys: they teach their weak counterparts to be adventurous, assert themselves and even fight. By the close of the novel, the previously sissy boy has been transformed by the tomboy friend into a strong and even powerful man” (xvii). Since sissies were believed to have become sissies because of their closeness and dependence on their mothers, only closeness to tomboys could fix that defect. In their characterization, Alcott evokes nineteenth century’s anxiety associated with gender bending. Although at the beginning of the novel, both Jo and Laurie are presented as gender deviants, the anxiety about a sissy was more pronounced. Such views about sissies transcend history. Some recent literary critics also consider Laurie’s depiction in *Little Women* as weak. While sissies are the opposite of the bad boys, their commendable traits are often overlooked. Ken Parille points out this disjunction in literary analysis of Laurie’s character, when he writes:

Jan Susina in “Men in *Little Women*,” the only article in the collection *Little Women and the Feminist Imagination* that focuses on men characters, takes a dismissive view of Laurie and his significance in the novel. Calling him “an awful character,” and unrealistic figure,” an eternal boy,” “a token male,” and “not a real boy,” Susina takes Laurie as a mistake: I certainly don’t want to be Laurie” (169). Following earlier critics, he thinks of Laurie as undifferentiated “fifth sister,” but this overlooks both the complexity of Laurie’s life and Alcott’s interest in how life dramatizes problems that boys faced. (63)

Parille quite aptly sums up the male anxiety of gender bending in boys, and draws our attention to the influence and power of that anxiety even among twenty-first century literary critics. This anxiety projects the character of a tomboy as somehow increasing the girl’s worth, but sissies continue to fall short of expectations and devalue boyhood in general. Contrary to such emasculation anxiety voiced by some critics, Alcott’s portrayal of Laurie is quite dynamic. Even

though Laurie is shy and reserved, he is well-versed in languages, with a natural talent for music, and is very well-mannered. His character is more complex than Jo's because Alcott tries to find the cure to his loneliness. The March family discusses him and pledges to befriend him. Not only that, as an orphan living with his rich but strict grandfather, Alcott presents the cause for his loneliness and prepares readers early in the narrative for some character-building: "He's a capital fellow, and I wish we could get acquainted. He looks as if he'd like to know us but he's bashful, and Meg is so prim she won't let me speak to him when we pass," said Jo, as the plates went round, and the ice began to melt out of sight, with ohs and ahs of satisfaction" (21). Hence, the cause for such diffidence in a boy is attributed to a secluded life, as Jo points out, "He keeps his grandson shut up, when he isn't riding or walking with his tutor, and makes him study very hard. We invited him to our party, but he didn't come. Mother says he's very nice, though he never speaks to us girls" (21). Surprisingly, Jo, herself a tomboy, tries to find reasons for Laurie's effeminacy: "...he needs fun, I'm sure he does," said Jo decidedly" (21).

Alcott establishes parallels between Jo and Laurie very early in her story. Like social pariahs, both of them escape from the company of young girls and boys at the party and seek refuge behind the curtain: "Jo saw a big red headed youth approaching her corner, and fearing he meant to engage her, she slipped into a curtained recess, intending to peep and enjoy herself in peace. Unfortunately, another bashful person had chosen the same refuge, for, as the curtain fell behind her, she found herself face to face with the 'Laurence boy'" (27). We know that they are kindred souls. Alcott's purpose in portraying Jo and Laurie was not merely to present tomboys and sissies as gender confused, or as anomalies; rather, a desire to portray 'psychic androgyny,' much desired by both Twain, Coleridge, Blake, Woolf, and also to some extent Cixous. Jo and Laurie embody Alcott's vision of psychic androgyny. To fulfill this vision, Alcott removes any

“erotic charge” in their friendship. Although Laurie seems interested in Jo and proposes to her, Jo rebuffs him by saying, “I don’t. I never wanted to make you care for me so, and I went away to keep you from it if I could” (362). Alcott refuses to transform the friendship of a tomboy and a sissy into romance, for how can a person marry his or her own image.

In spite of an overwhelming anxiety about gender bending, Alcott and Twain depart from the postbellum tradition of creating gendered characters as role models for real boys and girls. Resisting the impulse to join the gender war playing out in full force in the literary arena, they create their vision of the androgynous ideal that has interested philosophers and writers in the past. Foregoing that impulse also enabled them to create hybrid genres, thus challenging the apparent bifurcation of nineteenth-century literature on gender lines. Alcott and Twain’s fusion of Jo and Laurie and Huck and Jim celebrates the prospect of blending writing and human experience and redefining it in specific terms distinct from the norm.

## Conclusion

Nineteenth-century America was an important epoch in American history. Not only were two wars fought but America gained independence and was also on the verge of division within fifty years of its freedom. Such rapid changes in the country's political, economic, and social fabric were bound to have a lasting impact in shaping its identity. The effect of the wars was a huge increase in orphans, real and metaphorical, all across the country. In fact, the orphan metaphor can describe the experience of the new nation very aptly. After the Revolution of 1812, the nation sundered all ties to the homeland and forged ahead, in search of that identity. In this self-fashioning, new impediments and challenges were encountered and resolved. This was a century rife with contesting ideas and beliefs competing for cultural acceptance. The quintessential American identity that arises out of these conflicts is essentially that of the dominant group. Race, class, and gender intersect in interesting ways to render nineteenth-century American experience unparalleled and unique in world history.

Complementing the image of the new nation as orphan were the scores of real orphans who populated the country. Although these orphans were not restricted to any particular class, race, or gender, the number of orphans belonging to the working or low classes and of non-white (Anglo-Saxon) races were more in number. While the orphans of the upper and middle-class were often looked after by relatives or friends, the indigent or dependent orphans were considered a burden to society. In the antebellum, the orphan problem was more contained because of multiple reasons. In the South, the institution of slavery ensured that all slave children were forced to live as orphans as they were separated from their families and put to work on plantations. Their upkeep did not create much social anxiety as they were earning their living. In the North, industrial growth was still in its infancy in the antebellum. Although European



immigrants continued to pour into America, the situation was still under control. The Civil War and Reconstruction spurred many economic, social, and political changes in the country. With the Civil War and slavery over, the slave children, who were already living like orphans, increased in numbers becoming a concern. From major cities to farms in the Mid-West, the large numbers of orphans were seen as a public scourge as they rattled the sensibilities of the emerging moral or middle-classes. In a concerted effort to legitimize and to some extent prove its own exceptionalism, the middle-class justified and engineered the social exclusion of the non-normative orphans belonging either to the working class or colored races. The Middle-class becomes the “buffer social control stratum” (Allen 168) in the changing social scene in postbellum America. In a strict nineteenth-century sense, the middle class implied a group of people, mostly native born, protestant and of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. As the American economy improved, the divisions in society become more apparent. The newly arriving immigrants found low-paid menial jobs in the various industries that flourish as they settle in the newly sprouting industrial towns across America causing overcrowded urban spaces. Rapid industrialization coincided with the ascendancy of the middle-class in the North and class formation. The middle class mobilized to exclude and to dehumanize the working class in order to define itself as more moral. Such exclusion of the working class in general, and these “other” orphans shape the reigning ideology of the time, which in turn finds an expression in literary works.

While society grappled with the orphan problem and looked to find ways to resolve what many believed was a scourge, literary figures too weighed in on the problem. As discourse on the orphan evolved and got more nuanced, postbellum literature, too, explored the orphan’s condition. Through their works, writers of all hue sought solutions to the problem resulting in a plethora of orphan fiction in an attempt not only to depict the orphan experience but also to

participate in the exclusion of the “other” orphans and to include normative orphans in nation-building by extolling their virtues.

Race, class, and gender align to exclude certain orphans, both real and metaphorical. Race becomes an important marker in marginalizing people in the new republic. The African American slaves and the Native Indian population’s supposed inferiority compared to the white settlers was established before the nineteenth century. They were denied basic rights that whites enjoyed. As the European immigrants started to arrive in America in the nineteenth century, white race identity becomes circumspect. The Catholic immigrants join the ranks of the black slaves and Native Indians as inferior to whites. As the country grappled with free slaves and European immigrants arriving in droves, race was redefined to restrict white privilege exclusively for certain groups. Whiteness became simultaneously definite and arbitrary. Racial and religious oppression combine to suppress all three excluded groups making them the metaphorical orphans of the country. The situation of the mixed-blood people becomes even more problematic as they do not exhibit specific racial markers that can categorize them.

Since novels were a popular medium of creative expression in these times, most novels tend to condone such discriminatory practices. They reflect society’s anxieties about such children and also offer solutions for their care and ways to reform them, while engaging in the discourse of the time. Race and religion were often conflated to denounce the ‘nature’ of the ‘other’ orphan as they were projected as the anti-thesis of the heteronormative middle-class white orphan. Such discussions usually explore the ‘good’ nature or character of the heteronormative orphans. Stories of orphans revolve around character formation, a prescriptive notion of character within a Protestant framework. The dominant portrayals of orphans have relied on such definitions in characterizing them, while racial orphans have often been depicted

as lacking a good moral character. Topsy Turvy's portrayal by Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the most iconic portrayal of slave orphans and served as a model for later day depictions of these orphans. With the exception of Mark Twain, Stowe influenced her contemporaries and later writers. It is noteworthy that most writers in the antebellum and the postbellum were either white men or white women. Although this study focuses primarily on white writers, who mostly reinforced and reinscribed dominant social worldview pertaining to the orphans, Twain, Alcott, and Johnson depart from tradition in reimagining the orphan experience from the point-of-view of race and class. In spite of all the attempts to exclude specific orphans, they manipulate the normative ideas of character, education and religion to normalize these excluded orphans and write them into the American literary history. Although Alcott remains loyal to her own background by reinforcing the dominant culture's dislike for Irish orphans as discussed in her portrayal of the Irish Dan in *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*, she addresses the gender divide of the culture by portraying her heroine, Jo in *Little Women*, defying society's strict gender codes. In some ways, all the writers discussed in this study tend to reinforce and subvert some aspects of society's strict impositions, and in doing so, they help us reimagine nineteenth-century orphans in interesting ways.

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