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# Outsiders to Whom? Reimagining the Creation of Young Adult Literature in the United States

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# OUTSIDERS TO WHOM? REIMAGINING THE CREATION OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
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2019


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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

OUTSIDERS TO WHOM? REIMAGINING THE CREATION OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES

The study of young adult literature has become widespread within Children's and Young Adult Literature specifically and literary studies as a whole. However, the term "young adult" which defines and focalizes both the literature itself and the ostensible readers for whom it is produced remains a poorly-examined area. The present study examines the creation of one branch of what we now call "young adult literature" from its roots in the United States in the early twentieth century to its emergence as a dominant literary form in the mid-to-late 1960s. In doing so, it seeks to reconcile emerging professional, psychological, sociological, pedagogical, cultural, and ideological discourses concerning adolescence and young adulthood with works of fiction prepared specifically for their consumption. It also seeks to position the changing role of adolescent subjects into the larger framework of American Studies by examining how these texts reflected, tested, and reinforced dominant paradigms of thought surrounding how adolescents would become actualized American subjects. At the same time, it broaches concerns within these dominant paradigms that have been overlooked in constructing historical approaches to the development of young adult literature, and it suggests a few methodologies by which to recover these undiscussed threads.

KEYWORDS: Children's literature, Young Adult Literature, 20th Century American Literature, cultural criticism, historical criticism

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# OUTSIDERS TO WHOM? REIMAGINING THE CREATION OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES

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DEDICATION

To Alex, my partner through all of this,
To my anonymous donor,
And to the hematology-oncology team at UK Markey Cancer Care.

This dissertation is completed in memory of Kyle Eveleth and Wes Frank, my namesakes.

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"[T]he amorphous part is the target audience for the literature: the young adults themselves. For it's anybody's guess who—or what—they are!"

Michael Cart, *From Romance to Realism* (2003), 3.

## I.1. WHAT IS A "YOUNG ADULT"?

In the study of children's literature, produced by adults for children, the question of who the child is behind "children's literature" has been the topic of much discussion. At least since Jacqueline Rose's landmark book, *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Literature* (1984), critics have theorized about the boundaries of the child subject conceptualized in children's literature. From Karin Lesnik-Oberstein's *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (1994) or Virginia Blum's *Hide and Seek: The Child Between Psychoanalysis and Fiction* (1995) to Peter Hollindale's *Signs of Childness in Children's Fiction* (1997) or the more recent Perry Nodelman's *The Hidden Adult* (2008) and Kenneth Kidd's *Freud in Oz* (2011), the child in children's literature has been a topic of much academic debate. What they have contended, in various forms, is essentially this: the iconic child of children's literature is the so-called "iconic child," less a real child than a conglomeration of anxieties, nostalgic longings, expectations, and assumptions about what childhood *should* be like.

The young adult behind young adult literature, however, has not enjoyed nearly as much attention. Efforts by recent scholars, including Sarah K. Hertz and Donald Gallo (2006), Roberta Seelinger Trites (2007), Maria Nikolajeva (2009 and 2015), and Mike Cadden (2010) have postulated a distinction between literature for children and literature for young adults, but little work has been done to examine the *reader* of these works

about whom (or using whose consciousness as a focalizing narrative) they are invariably written. Put another way, though the literary assumptions that attend young adult literature have been documented, little attention has been paid to the ramifications of those assumptions as they pertain to how young adult subjects are understood. While the "child" of children's literature has been examined in great detail as a conceptual category constructed from adult expectation and desire, rather than a real child, the "young adult" of young adult literature has been widely (and erroneously) understood as a more or less accurate representation of an adolescent person. This assumption remains a weakness of scholarship about young adult literature for two major reasons: first, the role adult expectation and desire plays in constructing the "iconic young adult" behind young adult literature demands examination and explication to better understand how young adulthood is reckoned in relationship to childhood and adulthood. Second, and more to the point of the current study, failing to address the evolving historical, cultural, social, and personal assumptions that contribute to the "iconic young adult" likewise prevents scholars from precisely documenting the development of that "iconic young adult," which is neither monolithic nor stable.

Part of the problem inherent in defining the "young adult," it seems, comes from the difficulty of tackling a concept that was created specifically to sell books. The seminal work in defining young adult literature remains Michael Cart's *From Romance to Realism* (1996; revised edition 2003), which locates the "creation" of young adult literature in the 1960s, somewhat coeval with the Civil Rights Movements their associated cultural upheavals. This association—along with Cart's assertions that teens wanted "authentic" literature written explicitly for them (3)—presupposes that publishers

were simply meeting an existing demand, rather than creating a term under which a slew of extant texts and traditions could be conveniently marketed to an emerging consumer demographic. This is patently incorrect. Rather, the problem was not that teens were not reading in 1960, when the category was proposed, but rather that *what* they were reading (mostly comic books and magazines) was regarded widely as subliterary at best and potentially dangerous at worst. More importantly to publishers, *they weren't reading books*. Thus, in an effort to target an enormous post-Baby Boom market of teenagers with money to spare, publishers began producing books "specifically for" teenage readers.

One problem with that distinction: publishers had already been writing books for teenagers without calling them anything different for decades. Nevertheless a new term for adolescent subjectivity had been thrust on the scene and critics needed to account for it.[1] However, even within publishing companies people could not agree on what constituted a teenager: were nineteen year-olds, nominally adults, still teenagers (sometimes yes, sometimes no). What about twenty-somethings, who deal with many of the same existential issues but are definitely not numerically *teen*s? Children are easily defined as "not adult," but teens, who are neither child nor adult, are more nebulous. Does one define them by mental ability, by age, by maturity, by certain life experiences, or something else? Even in the canonical foundation text for studies in young adult literature, former Young Adult Library Services Association president Michael Cart

[1] The seemingly endless subcategorization of literary works for young people occurs around this time as well, attending the spread of developmentalism into folk psychology. Developmentalism suggests that humans, and most especially young people, develop cognitively and socially according to discrete phases. The "best" developmental materials allow users to master previously-inhabited phases while working toward future ones (for example, sentence complexity or emotional abstraction). Publishers were happy to begin divvying up the canon of existing literature into convenient subcategories for young people, such as "easy readers," "chapter books," "tweens," "teens," and so on.

opines that defining the young adult is "about as easy as nailing Jell-O to a wall" (3). It seems that even in texts devoted to understanding and providing for young adult readers, the canonical approach is to view the subject as a thing alien to the self or anything else one might recognize it as. In my epigraph, I reproduce Cart's telling objectification of the young adult: "it's anybody's guess who—or *what*—they are!" (3). Stripped of humanity, young adults become some unknown creature of unknown origin and unknown potential.

As Ibram X. Kendi writes in *How to Be an Antiracist* (2019), "definitions anchor us in principles" (17). If we do not expand upon Cart's severely lacking definition of young adult, mired in the inherent instability of the category, then we accept as our principles an inherent indeterminacy. While this is useful for better recognizing the liminal status of adolescence, imbued with incredible potential, it has not been recognized in this fashion until very recently. Rather, indeterminacy has been an excuse for refusing to address systemic prejudice against teens of color, of nonheteronormative sexuality, of different economic backgrounds, of different ethnic heritages, of various religions, and of many kinds of physically and mentally nonnormative diagnoses. By allowing the definition of teen to be categorically unstable, critics and policy makers have allowed the voices of these marginalized groups to be silenced at worst and co-opted at best. As Kendi maintains, "[I]f we don't do the basic work of defining the kind of people we want to be in language that is stable and consistent, we can't work toward stable and consistent goals" (17). It is valuable to trace the ways in which maintaining the "instability" of young adulthood have perpetuated systemic prejudices that we might better understand and rectify these blind spots in our understanding of adolescent subjectivity.

Stated frankly, young adults as literary subjects occupy the same liminal space between childhood and adulthood as adolescents do in biology, but they are not identical categories that can be used interchangeably. Rather, because of its deployment first as a marketing term by publishing companies, the "young adult" who looms in young adult literature must be reckoned with as a construct that simultaneously describes a particular formulation of adolescent identity while masquerading as a universal step in human development. Put another way, the "young adult" of young adult literature, like the "child" of children's literature, is "iconic" rather than real: it describes a fantasy of young adulthood, one that is indelibly inscribed with political, cultural, psychosocial, sexual, racial, and economic assumptions about adolescent subjectivity. That is to say that the "young adult" in young adult literature does not describe actual young adults, but rather serves as a repository for the expectations and demands of the dominant cultural creators who produce "young adult" literature.

So what, then, is a "young adult"? The short answer is that it is a fabrication designed to provide a ready-made identity to a group of people who experience significant struggles with identity. The longer answer deserves detailing further, and the present study looks to perform that examination. Suffice it to say, however, that recent surveys of young adult literature have shown a few things are true about this iconic young adult: first, that it is deliriously popular with readers, and therefore carries significant cultural weight in the marketplace of ideas, not to mention the marketplace of book publishing. Second, the concept of young adulthood taps into adult expectations about adolescence as a moment of deep personal distress in the same way the concept of childhood taps into a nostalgic remembrance of those "happy, golden years." Finally, and

most importantly, the image of the young adult is incomplete, overlooking the lived experiences of real adolescents who do not fit into its limited scope, and the term's deployment as a ubiquitous point in life marginalizes those who do not fit it in drastic, real, and palpable ways.

## I.2. THE CURRENT CRITICAL PICTURE

As it stands, there are few literary histories of what is, in 2019, one of the highest-selling categories of literature in the United States. A 2012 market study by Bowker Market Research notes that adults older than eighteen account for 55% of all purchases of young adult literature. Within that number, 28% of purchasers were between thirty and forty-four years of age. Most striking, however, was the fact that the vast majority of purchasers, 78%, were buying for themselves. *Publishers Weekly* corroborated these findings in an independent study, finding that numbers had actually increased: between December 2012 and November 2013, 79% of young adult literature buyers were over eighteen (1). In fact, the target market, twelve to eighteen, was third in percentage of purchases, behind both eighteen to twenty-nine (34%) and thirty to forty-four (now 26%) (2). This trend of reading "out of age group" is not without precedent: in a 2003 update to *From Romance to Realism,* Michael Cart admires the distance young adult literature has covered since its inception, marveling that it "pushes back the previous boundaries that had limited its readership to young people" (113). For Cart, the early 21st century has proven to be a kind of "second Golden Age" for young adult literature, meeting and far surpassing even the production of the mid-1970s that produced much of what is now considered "classic" young adult literature (8).

Cart's work remains the primary historical resource for understanding how young adult literature came to exist in the United States, tracing its lineage by texts from the end of the Civil War to the twentieth century. Though histories of young adult literary formation are sparse, the topic of "youth culture" is a much more widespread area of study that is dispersed across disciplines within the humanities. In American studies, examinations of "youth culture" appear in scholarship on the Cold War, subordinate to the larger project of contextualizing so-called "containment" and "deterrence" culture of the time period. In Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988), Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age* (1995), and, most recently, Denis Jonnes's *Cold War American Literature and Rise of Youth Culture* (2015), the Cold War and its attendant anxieties--whether about containing Communism or preventing an atomic cataclysm--are the main shaping forces acting upon youth culture. The confluence of these two areas provides the material for our current history of young adult literature's creation.

The only significant historical overview of teen life in the United States prior to 1965 is Grace Palladino's *Teenagers: An American History*. While Palladino's work does take into account many of the changing features of what constituted teen culture from the 1930s to the 1960s, much of her survey follows dominant trends amongst what we now recognize as the typical—and which I argue is the commodified and carefully-curated—iconic adolescent: white, middle to upper-middle class, heteronormative, and Judeo-Christian. Indeed, in a review of the book, Sarah Heath contends that Palladino's work "occasionally begs for deeper analysis, or at least for broader coverage of available data,"

and Heath notes that Palladino largely ascribes the efforts of minority teens to a larger individualistic determination "characteristic of all teens" (Heath). As we shall soon see, many minority teens were systematically excluded from this larger "teen identity" that Palladino and indeed many other scholars maintain as valid, and so it is not only anachronistic but also dangerously incorrect to conflate the efforts of those who were excluded from normative teenage identity with the larger group as a whole.

Curiously, none of these scholars examine texts widely *read* by adolescents, Heath notes that Palladino, in her overview of teen culture, tends only to cite "secondary sources" which discuss teen culture, but not teen culture itself. We can extend partial exemptions to Nadel and Jonnes's respective thoughts on *The Catcher in the Rye*. Both, however, ultimately read *Catcher* as a product of Salinger's time, written by a disaffected adult veteran. For Nadel, Holden Caulfield's language and tone throughout the novel are emblematic of McCarthy-era self-implication, betrayal, and confession; for Jonnes, Caulfield embodies Salinger's postwar suspicion of establishment leadership that would act as precursor to student protests in the 1960s. In both instances, Holden is understood as Salinger's adult recollection or formulation of adolescence. Thus, in both the fiction examined and then in the critique of it, adolescence as a subjectivity is articulated from an adult perspective. Though both Nadel and Jonnes rightly explain that the adolescent subject at the center of *Catcher* is the product of a deeply wounded adult concept of adolescence, neither attempts to discuss the novel's surprising popularity with adolescents despite their distance from the pre-1950s youth that Holden represents. Accounting for the work's popularity remains an important facet of the larger discussion

of how what would become commercialized young adult literature became so dominant as a category.

In literary criticism, some descents into actual youth cultural materials are performed, especially by Leerom Medevoi in *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (2005), which examines James Dean's popular depiction of the "rebel without a cause," and Rachael McClennan's *Adolescence, America, and Postwar Fiction: Developing Figures* (2009), which reads Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963). Both are, however, strongly tied to the midcentury moment, even as they contend that something other than the Cold War was on the minds of literary producers of the 1950s and 1960s. The only study that hearkens back to the roots of the Cold War in the 1930s and 1940s is Adam Piette's *The Literary Cold War, 1945-Vietnam* (2009). That work, however, focuses on a confluence of cultural concerns, such as genetics research and uranium prospecting, as they built into widespread atomic panic by midcentury. The only extant history truly concerned with shifting conceptualizations of adolescence in the lead up to the Cold War is Crista DeLuzio's *Female Adolescence in Scientific Thought, 1830-1930* (2007). DeLuzio performs an important examination of how "girls" became "young women" and how various scientific communities, from medical doctors to psychologists, sought to exert control over the female body as it began maturation. However, the literature described here is purely scientific, and DeLuzio has no reason to venture into fiction. Thus, uncovering the history of young adult literature is a practice in piecing together various narratives across fields and testing them against Cart's lone historical overview, which is itself mostly concerned with the proliferation of young adult literature from 1970 to the present. This study aims to provide an alternative view of that history

which will challenge Cart's argument that young adult literature is an organic outgrowth of adolescent need, a publisher meeting the demands of a demographic. Instead, I will show that what would become commercial young adult literature is indeed the product of concerted efforts across multiple sociocultural institutions to exert control over adolescent subjectivity.

## I.3. WHAT CONSTITUTES "YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE"?

To begin any discussion of who, exactly, the "young adult" named in the literary category of "young adult literature," it is useful to look at how scholars currently attempt to define that demographic. In *Young Adult Literature, Libraries, and Conservative Activism,* one of the more recent overviews of the cultural political phenomenon we now call "young adult literature," Loretta M. Gaffney contends that "YA [young adult] literature is not simply a collection of books: it is an idea about the value of youthful perspectives, the importance of forging identities and communities, and the power and possibility of public reading" (54). Put another way, for Gaffney young adult literature is defined as such merely because the books are "about teenagers" or "coming-of-age" (5), but rather because "YA novels are firmly grounded in a teenage perspective" that is characterized by what Gaffney wants to call the "*eternal present*" (emphasis in original), a desire to "live in the heat of the moment" and no motivation to "look back on youth" (6). Gaffney rightly admits that "YA literature is a constructed category, bound by particular social and political contexts that change over time" (6); nevertheless, Gaffney undercuts her own argument by uncritically deploying a conceptualization of the "teenager"--defined here as obsessed with the "eternal present"--that is rooted in a

particular social, historical, and political moment in the United States: turn-of-the-century ethnographic research into juvenile delinquency and human development performed by Granville Stanley Hall. And though some sixty years separate Hall's 1904 treatise on adolescence and the renaming of adolescent people as "young adults" for marketing purposes, nevertheless the moving parts of the definition have remained constant: young adults are believed to be impulsive, selfish, moody, hyper-aware of social structures, disaffected, rebellious, angsty people. If the "young adult" of young adult literature is a mediated icon, predicated on a particular historical moment's social and political conceptions of young adulthood, and it is also distinct from that culture's conceptions of teenagedness and coming-of-age, then how can it also be an ahistorical constant? How can one decade's "adolescents" be exactly the same as another decade's "young adults" if those categories are (correctly) understood as culturally, historically, socially, and indeed racially and economically mediated?

Gaffney's attempt to provide a history of how young adult literature came to be suffers from the same problem of claiming simultaneous historical specificity (i.e., they are specific to a moment in cultural history) and ahistorical ubiquity (i.e., they transcend cultural and historical moments). Gaffney cites the 1902 novel *The Story of Mary MacLane* as the likely precursor to the modern young adult novels of the mid-twentieth century. While the novel may hold up as an early form of modern young adult literature, Gaffney mitigates its potential importance by trying to have it be both transhistorical and historical. Rather than examining how the novel is a product of its particular moment's way of understanding adolescence, Gaffney instead focuses on its transhistorical qualities:

> When I teach YA literature to future librarians and teachers, I begin the course with Mary MacLane. I distribute the opening of *The Story of Mary MacLane* without any identifying information, then ask the students two questions: (1) When would they guess this piece was published? and (2) Should it be considered YA literature? The answer to the first question varies anywhere from the 1700s to the present day [...] Certainly, [the students] grant that MacLane but for some dated language "sounds" YA [...]. (4)

Ostensibly the purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that MacLane's novel is ahead of its time and therefore evokes what scholars now recognize as the modern young adult novel, a relatively new development in writing for young audiences. Immediately thereafter, however, Gaffney returns to the historical moment that produces the novel, arguing that "it is true that to call MacLane's work 'YA literature' would be ahistorical, for no such category of literature existed in the publishing world at the turn of the last century" (4). Put another way, *The Story of Mary MacLane* cannot be "YA literature" because the concept of the young adult comes sixty years later.

In these two juxtaposed statements, Gaffney implies that there is an ahistorical quality about young adult literature, tied to its emphasis on her so-called "eternal present" teen perspective while simultaneously engaging with a historical perspective that claims the book cannot be "YA" because "YA" did not exist as a publishing category. These two concepts are at odds with one another. Which is it? That young adult literature has an "elusive quality" (4) that crosses historical periods or that it is limited to the economic panderings of publishing houses? The remainder of Gaffney's slight history on the

production of young adult literature reinforces that the form is predicated not actually on a stylized protagonistic voice (the "eternal present" teen voice), but rather on whether or not American "advertisers identified [adolescents] as a viable consumer market" (6) and therefore "recognized [them] as a distinct stage of life rather than a murky, liminal period between childhood and adulthood" (6). Gaffney dismisses a number of important movements within writing for young people, including the ubiquitous series fiction, dime novels, juvenile novels, and comic books that emerged between 1890 and 1960 solely on the basis that "young adulthood" was not yet a concept in common American parlance. Yet, many of these novels feature the same obsession with presence and becoming-of-self that apparently motivates Gaffney's re-canonizing efforts. Something is amiss here.

Gaffney's attempt to divorce the definition of young adult literature from its intended readership is important, especially as critics and scholars begin to notice that more and more adults are reading young adult literature and that young adult literature is not, by definition, inferior art in comparison to literature (which does not take a modifier, such as "adult"). However, even as Gaffney makes the rhetorical moves necessary to demonstrate her allegiance to this project of taking young adult literature seriously--noting, for example, that YAL, like all other forms of artistic expression, interacts in complex ways with the cultures that produce it--she weakens her argument by ultimately failing to separate the "young adult" from the "literature." Put another way, Gaffney's defining feature of young adult literature, rather than being distinct from a definition that focuses on young adults-as-intended readers, is instead a defining characteristic of young adulthood that is historically mediated. Like her explication of *The Story of Mary MacLane*, the formulation of "young adulthood" to which Gaffney resorts is

simultaneously historically centered (here in the 1960s) and ahistorically deployed (across and somewhat regardless of time period). Moreover, despite Gaffney's suggestion that the teenage mindset is somehow universal, nevertheless her conception is contingent upon a specific subset of youth who are distinguished from their peers by their economic, cultural, and racial demographics: namely, American middle-class caucasian teens who came of age during the 1960s.

We could, perhaps, dismiss Gaffney's scholarship as having overlooked historical and cultural documents that render her definition insufficient. Troublingly, however, Gaffney is not breaking new ground her approach to defining the young adult in young adult literature merely replicates the dominant mode of thinking about young adulthood in scholarship on young adult literature. This paradoxically transhistorical and yet also intensely historical depiction of adolescence remains the dominant conceptualization of the young adult in critical examinations of young adult literature, undermining historicist projects (as well as attempts to reclaim texts that do not utilize such constructions of young adulthood). How did this problematic version of adolescent subjectivity, tainted as it was by then-trusted preconceptions about the role adolescence played in human development, nevertheless continue to reign supreme in academic studies of adolescent literature for the next century? How did the "murky, liminal period between childhood and adulthood" instead become an unquestionable locus of angst, disaffection, solitude, rebelliousness, and emotional instability?

The aim of the present study is to rectify the aforementioned inaccuracy in the study of young adult literature by examining the historical development of the "iconic young adult." The "iconic young adult" is the ur-concept to which the categorical term

"young adult" refers.[2] Scholars and critics of young adult literature have uncritically deployed a formulation of young adults that is peculiar to a specific historical, political, and social moment, and which has undergone modification in other areas of study focused on the teenager, such as the social sciences. Nevertheless, critics continue to employ the terminology uncritically across historical periods, societies, cultures, and genres. Doing so has effectively hidden the historically-mediated issues with the extant definition of "young adult," which have been demonstrated in both the social sciences and the humanities to have been based on faulty scientific observations that were driven by ethnocentrism. At the same time, retaining a definition of adolescent subjectivity that resists historical and social mediation as the current form does restricts study of the form significantly. After all, how can one study a biological period across moments in time and places in the world when the ways it is portrayed and reified are overtly determined by a twentieth-century, American-inflected, white, heteronormative, middle-class definition?

## I.4. HISTORICAL PRECEDENT AND PRIOR EXAMINATIONS

Maintaining a definition of the iconic adolescent at the center of young adult literature has effectively prevented the literature, as well as academic examination of it, from being taken seriously. Young adult literature remains an undertheorized and difficult-to-define category, even though critics have been claiming, as Crag Hill notes in

[2] This term should be recognizable to those familiar with Perry Nodelman's work on the "iconic child" of children's literature. am being careful here to use the term "young adult," rather than "adolescent," because unlike the iconic child of children's literature, the iconic young adult has been variously adjoined to and sundered from biological adolescence. This slippage will be of some importance in the first chapter, which discusses how biology and ideology have merged and diverged throughout the history of literature for adolescents. To avoid any miscommunication, therefore, I use the marketing term.

his appropriately-titled *Young Adult Literature Comes of Age* (2013), that young adult literature has been coming of age in the academy for the last twenty years (2).[3] Janet Alsup contends that young adult literature has still not experienced the same "systemic and scholarly examination of the literary and pedagogical effectiveness of the literature" (1). Unlike children's literature studies, its near-cousin and frequent collaborator, the study of young adult literature still lacks sustained critical, historical, and sociocultural examinations. This is not to say that theoretical work in young adult literature as distinct from children's literature has not been undertaken; on the contrary, studies abound on issues of structure, power, voice, and subjectivity.

These important works, however, cannot often maintain specificity because the subject of their examination is not specific either. Rather, the majority of these works deploy a notion of adolescent subjectivity that is at once seen as unique to a particular moment (the late 1960s) and yet also ubiquitous for teens across cultures and historical periods. Moreover, the features of this "iconic young adult," who stands in for real adolescent subjects as a distillation of (mostly adult) beliefs about adolescence, is not actually endemic to the cultural moment critics often claim it arises from, the late 1960s; rather, it is an amalgamation of various attitudes about adolescence from across periods and cultures and draws most strongly upon psychological tracts about juvenile delinquency from the early twentieth century.

[3] Gaffney repeats this claim in her book, published four years after Hill's (1). Despite claiming, as many have over the past twenty-five years, that young adult literature has "come of age," Gaffney and others nevertheless partake in the common practice of attempting to "redeem" young adult literature by showing that it is just as "important" or "meaningful" as other literatures, rather than taking it seriously as a matter of course.

Most extant critical texts about young adult literature rely upon a formulation of the adolescent that foregrounds instability, emotional rawness, societal alienation, existential angst, sexual promiscuity, and rebellious tendencies as inherently "adolescent" characteristics. Two words are commonly associated with this character: storm and stress. The relationship between *Sturm und Drang* is rooted in the German proto-Romantic tradition, most notably Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* [The Sorrows of Young Werther] (1774). The traditional translation of this term, "storm and drive," refers to the efforts of a young person to overcome obstacles in their lives. By 1904, however, *Sturm und Drang* would be corrupted to "storm and stress" and deployed most famously by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association, to describe a particular moment in the lives of teenagers that was characterized by sudden shifts in mood, rebellion against parental and social authority, and attraction to risky behaviors. This model of adolescence has become the dominant approach to characterizing young adults in contemporary criticism (Hilton and Nikolajeva 9). However, perhaps precisely because young adult literature has only rarely enjoyed critical attention to its historical and social development, contemporary critics of young adult literature who uncritically redeploy the "storm and stress" model of adolescence overlook noteworthy points in the development of professional discourses about adolescence. Chiefly, critics have overlooked challenges to this model by icons in the social sciences, who were quick to note that Hall's notions of adolescence were applied to all adolescents despite being observed only in delinquent populations (Arnett 188).

More importantly, however, in deploying a long-debunked formulation of adolescence as the subjectivity to which young adult literature caters, contemporary critics are unable to reckon with the ways in which the largely commercial young adult novel form was developed in the sixty years between Hall's suggestion of the "storm and stress" model and the adoption of "young adult" as a demographic match for the model. Some critics go so far as to argue that writing for young people prior to midcentury was undifferentiated, and attempts to recategorize works prior to around 1940 are merely "an attempt to circumvent the problem of audience" (Nikolajeva 2000, 263). At best, critics will concede that many works from between 1868 and 1967 may have been written with young people in mind given their propensity to feature older adolescent protagonists. Most critics, however, fall back on publishing categories because of the commercial nature of publishing for younger readers. Because "young adults" were not a marketing category, those works produced before the creation of "young adulthood" in the 1960s can only be retroactively considered as written for teen audiences (as if the teenage years did not exist until there was a name for them!). The inability to reckon flexibly with the various ways that adolescent experiences are mediated by the historical moments and cultures in which they are located has hampered the study of young adult literature from re-examining important, often canonical works that share qualities with the body of "modern" young adult literature. A secondary aim of this study, then, is to broaden the ways we conceive of young adulthood by attempting to show that concerns about adolescents predated the creation of young adulthood as a category, opening the historical periods in which critics can discuss adolescence and its representation in literature.

## I.5. TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE DEFINITION

This study takes a historical view in part as an attempt to show how the conversations that now permeate the study of young adult literature, such as the role of adolescent subjects in the economy, the nation, and social structures writ large, were being tested and examined long before the phrase "young adult" was ever uttered by a publishing marketer. At the same time, however, I take a historical approach because so few examples of such a study exist for young adult literature. The only historical overview of the development of young adult literature, Michael Cart's *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* (1996; updated 2003 and retitled as simply *From Romance to Realism*) has been an indispensable resource for scholars in the field for over two decades. However, it fails to address the actual *development* of young adult literature, instead tracing the *growth* of an existing category. To wit, *From Romance to Realism* distills nearly hundred years of production for adolescent readers into four noteworthy epochs: mid-nineteenth century American literature *about* young people, such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (both 1868), which critics (including Cart and Gaffney) frequently maintain was read by most Americans regardless of age; early twentieth-century series books by the Edward Stratemeyer Syndicate, such as *The Hardy Boys* (1927) and *Nancy Drew* (1930); early-teen-culture profession novels, such as Helen Boylston's *Sue Barton, Student Nurse* (1936) or and Helen Wells's *Cherry Ames* (1943); and late precursors to modern young adult fiction, such as Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). Cart claims that the dearth of texts available to teens at this time is predicated largely on the fact that "because adolescents, teenagers, or young adults were [...] still widely regarded

as children, [...] there was no separate category of literature specifically targeted at them" (8). But in reducing the near century between 1868's *Little Women* or *Ragged Dick* and 1967's landmark publication of S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, which Cart identifies as the birth of modern young adult literature (27), Cart overlooks the dramatically shifting landscape concerning adolescence in the United States. In a handful of pages (three), Cart tries to account for the rise of industrialization, changing workforce and labor regulations, educational age-gradation and extension of compulsory education, and the growing disconnect between adolescents and either children or parents by attaching them to the publishing trends that targeted young people. All told, Cart gives a century of production (between 1860 and 1960) for young people just one more page than he gives to two decades of modern production (the 1960s and 1970s). Taking on nearly a century of writing in sixteen pages inevitably fails to maintain the granularity necessary to see more clearly *how* the fiction of this time molded and was molded by popular opinion about what constituted adolescent subjectivity. Where granular movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as the problem novel, receive extensive attention, the time between 1860 and 1960 is reduced to adolescents reading out of age range.

To date, only a few studies have taken seriously that this time needs to be understood not as a nearly barren expanse that was uninhabited because of commercial inviability. Among the few that deign to examine the early precursors to youth culture that would culminate in modern young adult literature, most are concerned with the post-World War II and early Cold War moment. Though this is fitting because of the rise of the rebel as an icon of adolescence in the American mindset around this time, such studies overlook significant changes to adolescence that predate that icon's development

and deployment in American culture. The only study that truly concerned with shifting conceptualizations of adolescence in the lead up to the Cold War is Crista DeLuzio's *Female Adolescence in Scientific Thought, 1830-1930* (2007). DeLuzio performs an important examination of how "girls" became "young women" and how various scientific communities, from medical doctors to psychologists, sought to exert control over the female body as it began maturation. However, the literature described here is purely scientific, and DeLuzio has no reason to venture into fiction. Thus, while DeLuzio's book is an important addition to attempts to re-historicize the study of adolescence and its representations, it can only form a part of the picture when discussing fiction written for those individuals.

Even today critics tend to shy away from analyzing what teens actually read during this time period. This critical blindness is in part due to the continued conceptualization of young adult fiction as "offering relatable narratives, building bridges to the classics, advancing social justice through multicultural literature, [and] jump-starting reluctant readers" (Hill xiii). Put another way, young adult literature is understood as "gateway" literature, a "bridge" between the similarly literary examples of children's and adult's classics. Worse yet, the "in-between" literature of the 1940s and 1950s, which frequently served as a testing ground for differing views of adolescence in fiction, nevertheless has not received much critical attention because those "junior novels" are often not profoundly literary in quality, even as they provide insights into how American culture of the period thought of its teen citizens. Critical inattention of these "pre-literary" forms has resulted in a situation in which, as Alison Waller explains, young adult literature is not evaluated by its own merits, but negatively in relation to the

things it is not (18). Indeed, it is because of this frequent association of young adult fiction with lesser fiction that the study of young adult literature remains a subfield within children's literature or a special interest in national or historical literary study.

In order to rehabilitate the historical development of the iconic adolescent that lead to its particularly rebellious, antisocial formation in the late 1960s, this dissertation focuses explicitly on the "barren years" of production for adolescent readers, the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. These decades are perhaps the most important for contextualizing the development of what we now call "young adult" subjectivity because they were the proving grounds for emergent social, political, literary, and economic conceptualizations of the adolescent-*cum*-young-adult. Unlike the 1910s and 1920s, which were dominated by series fiction by a handful of publishing entities, the 1930s through the 1950s saw outgrowths of cultural commodification focused on youth on an unparalleled scale. These rapidly-developing forms of economic subjectification dovetailed with increasing economic disparity across classes, races, and ethnicities, increasing leisure time for more adolescents as compulsory education pushed deeper into young adulthood, and massively increasing populations of American teenagers. This time in American history is rightly recognized in the social sciences as the era of the adolescent, in which discourses about adolescence as a specific subjectivity flourished and fought for dominance in increasingly public debates about the role of adolescence in development. However, it is not highly recognized as a time of growing supply and demand for writing about adolescence, despite a massive outgrowth of writing about and for adolescent people.

## I.6. CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

The first chapter of this examination provides a historical overview of the first three decades or so of professional discourse development concerning the adolescent. This examination is undertaken in part to demonstrate how quickly and significantly discourses about adolescent subjectivity evolved and were taken up (and summarily left behind) by researchers in the social sciences, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and educational theory. At the same time, the analysis is performed to demonstrate that certain ideas of what adolescence is most characterized by came into and out of vogue over time before being resurrected at midcentury with the "societal turn." This turn in the social sciences marks the age where examination of the individual becomes more attached to the trials of society: belonging, finding a place within social structures, committing to identities that may be at odds with personal indexes of happiness and stability. As the social sciences turned to the individual's relationship with society as the locus of many psychological discomforts, the adolescent subject took on much of the responsibility of functioning as the developmental epoch in which societal ties were tested, examined, and altered. By the 1950s, one's role within society was considered perhaps the most important issue to the adolescent mind, a development that would render conformity and rebellion the most important concepts in discourses about adolescence for nearly two decades.

The second chapter backtracks slightly to begin reading works of fiction that were read widely by adolescents between 1930 and 1960. In this chapter, I examine Carol Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn* (1935), a Newbery award winner, in order to demonstrate how female adolescence became unified with conspicuous consumption

around the end of the Great Depression. Drawing upon a romanticized version of a post-Civil War coming-of-age narrative, *Caddie Woodlawn* reinforces anachronistic beliefs about the importance of conspicuous consumption of commodities in building one's identity in the theatre of social drama. Caddie's path to womanhood inevitably leads from the rollicking freedom of tomboyhood through democratic participation in the marketplace, where Caddie will need to spend her money wisely in ways that will reinforce her femininity and Americanness while being wary of frivolity or greed. In this novel, I argue, readers see firsthand how publishing for children on the brink of adolescence connects participation in commodity culture with national survival as well as the construction of the individual identity. This early form of commodifying adolescence will prove a precursor to the explosion of teen culture in the 1940s, which was specifically targeted at the same girls who read books like *Caddie Woodlawn* in their childhood.

The third chapter examines another branch of commodification, focusing more on male adolescent subjects than on female. It reads the early issues of *Captain America Comics* (1941) as mass-market works that sought to provide teenage boys with a specific formulation of American wartime masculinity, the eponymous Captain America and his boy sidekick Bucky Barnes. Captain America and Bucky reflect a profoundly conservative vision of American masculinity, one that is defined by physical strength, mental acuity, and absolute submission to the will of the nation in service against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Even as these characters model the physical citizenship to which many teenage boys in the 1940s would be called to participate through the Armed Forces, it also reinforces commercial forms of Americanness. Through advertising of the

patriotic fanclub, the Sentinels of Liberty, *Captain America Comics* simultaneously reinforces a specific form of noncombatant citizenship that mandates commodification, social surveillance, and cultural conformity as the keys to ensuring American success on the home front. The meteoric emergence of the superhero in the late 1930s and the undisputed dominance by the form of the mass-production market through the 1940s worked in tandem with a form of adolescent subjectivity that bought into conformity wholesale. As we see, however, that conformist government square would not persist for long after the end of hostilities against the Axis powers. The short-lived rise of the adolescent as the perfectly conforming patriot would not last the decade, but not until after it made publishers incredible amounts of money from comicbook sales and club subscriptions.

The fourth chapter looks to a canonical piece of American literature that has been valorized both as literary and an early version of young adult literature in order to reconcile the massive shift from conformist adolescent to rebel around the Cold War. Reading J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), I argue that the novel has been commodified since its publication as a teenage problem novel. Though the novel excoriates the results-driven world of adulthood *as well as* contemporaneous adolescent life's focus on scurrying up the social ladder, "domesticating" *The Catcher in the Rye* as "merely" a problem novel deflects much of its ire. Instead, because the novel depicts forms of antisociality and rebellion that, by the middle of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, were quickly becoming commodified, culturally normal attitudes for teenagers, it instead rose to popularity as an expression of the same anxiety it examines as a malady. The same novel that had been censored from teenage readers at the beginning

of the decade became marketed as an authentic teenage experience of angst and disenchantment by its close. The same groups that sought to prevent adolescents from reading *The Catcher in the Rye* inscribed it almost indelibly on high school reading curricula; in eventually valorizing the book as an example of adolescent subjectivity, well-meaning educators and psychologists reinforced the incommensurability of adolescence with adulthood. Later in the 1960s, that notion of subjectivity would be taken up by Hollywood and sexualized before being turned into a commodity in film.

The final chapter, a sort of conclusion but also a reinterpretation, examines the most commonly-cited model of young adult literature, S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967). In this novel, I claim, all vestiges of actual rebellion or antisociality have been commodified into a safe, neatly-packaged form of adolescence. This packaging of rebellion into safe and digestible teen stories began with *The Catcher in the Rye* and achieved its pinnacle in *The Outsiders*. Unifying early drives to commodify the urge to belong in society with later depictions of adolescence as defiantly not participating in society, *The Outsiders* reflects the form of commodified adolescence that has been packaged as "young adulthood" and regurgitated in critical examinations of the form for decades. In so doing, the critical power of adolescence as a lens through which change and inadequacy can be deconstructed has been neutered, particularly in the ways that such a definition of "young adult" is reliant upon a racially and economically homogenous demographic. However, I note that the form can be recovered, and offer a few ways that such recovery might take place.

# CHAPTER 1. THE "CREATION" OF ADOLESCENT CULTURE

Adolescence is that period of life which lies between childhood and adulthood. [...] This age has been variously called "the awkward age," "the age of storm and stress," "the silly age." The girl is called "flapper," "gawk," "*backfisch*[4]"; the boy is designated "jackanapes," "shaver," "stripling," "popinjay," "moon-calf," "green-horn," or as in the southern part of the United States, "jelly bean." These terms describe the general callowness of the period, and the good-natured contempt in which it is held by the mature.

Leta S. Hollingworth, "What Is Adolescence?" in *The Psychology of the Adolescent* (NY: Doubleday, 1928): 1.

## 1.1. A LINK TO THE PAST

The roots of the mid-century youth revolution suggested by the creation of young adult literature run far deeper than has been previously discussed. Recapitulating both recent and distant history as context for *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), anthropologist Margaret Mead writes:

> During the last hundred years parents and teachers have ceased to take childhood and adolescence for granted. [...] Psychology suggested that much might be gained by a knowledge of the way in which children developed, of the stages through which they passed, of what the adult world might reasonably expect of the baby of two months or the child of two years. And the fulminations of the pulpit, the loudly voiced laments of the conservative social philosopher, the records of juvenile courts and social agencies all suggested that something must be done with the period which science had named adolescence. The spectacle of a younger generation diverging ever more widely from the standards and ideals of the past, cut adrift without the anchorage of respected home standards or group religious values, terrified the cautious reactionary, tempted the radical propagandist to missionary crusades among the defenceless youth, and worried the least thoughtful among us. (1-2)

[4] A German term for a girl between childhood and adulthood. Literally means "fish for frying." Whether or not this is meant to be derogatory is a worthy question.

She continues, saying that the "disturbed status of youth" in America was rendered more obvious thanks to American culture's "many immigrant strains, its dozens of conflicting standards of conduct, its hundreds of religious sects, [and] its shifting economic conditions" (2). Nevertheless, the actions Mead describes with a desperate tone in her 1928 introduction seem all but lost to current literary examinations of the history of young adult literature and culture. Though some small attention has been paid to "prototypes" and precursors by Michael Cart, on the whole his evaluation of these early examples reinforces their rarity and exceptionality--neither of which seems to be the case upon further inspection.

Instead, children's and young adult literature scholars have largely ignored more than a hundred years of theorization and critique across multiple disciplinary lines, all of which contributed in a meaningful way to the crystallization of "young adulthood" in the 1960s. Indeed, the very terminology that is often understood as a relatively contemporary creation, "young adult," is more than two centuries old. In this chapter, I will trace the "discourse about developing youth" from its 1830s origins (DeLuzio 258) to early twentieth-century theorizations of adolescence by Granville Stanley Hall (1904), widely and erroneously cited as the creator of the modern notion of adolescence. From there, I demonstrate how psychoanalytic theories of mind take up adolescence as a fertile space for depositing contentious theories about emotional, social, and cultural instabilities. Finally, I show how other discourses, from anthropology to library studies, evolved extant theories to fit their needs, culminating in midcentury pundit Fredric Wertham, whose *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) encapsulated supposedly widely-circulating anxiety about the corruptibility of unguarded adolescents.

In so doing, I want to demonstrate that this lost half-century and more expanse of thought was not merely a time of percolation for the concept of adolescence, but rather a testing ground for the kinds of work that needed to be done by adults in order to control adolescent desire. Far from representing a linear trajectory of the evolution of single idea, cultural attitudes about adolescence grew rhizomatically. Many of the false-starts and dead ends that characterize that Deleuzean concept were, in fact, attempts to counteract a prevailing assumption about adolescence: that it was a time of profound emotional and psychic distress. At the same time, the discourse about adolescence was an arena in which the iconic adolescent became concretized as white, middle class, heteronormative, and civically-minded.

In reconstructing the history of the creation of young adult literature to include this untheorized period, I want to rectify three key issues with the current study of adolescent and young adult literature. First, this chapter connects recent work by historians such as Crista DeLuzio on the development of discourses about adolescence with extant critical histories by librarians and literary theorists, such as Michael Cart. It will serve as the first support structure for this dissertation's overarching goal, to bridge a gap in analysis between the end of the historians' examinations (1930) and the beginning of literary examinations (1960) of young adult literature. Rectifying this gap in history will allow critics to study literature read by adolescents and young adults across periods that do not utilize those terms. At the present moment, studying "young adult literature" prior to 1967 is essentially practice in fighting the definition of "young adult literature," which requires "young adults" to exist to read the books in question. Of course, this requires a stronger definition, such as the one I suggest in the introduction. Finally,

opening a larger expanse of the literary history of the United States to scrutiny for its role in building what is now the largest and most widely-read category in American publishing (young adult literature) will offer an important opportunity to reconsider how deeply American ideals about adolescence have shaped the literary landscapes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Because the mechanisms by which adults exerted control over adolescent subjectivity were multivalent, this chapter is also structured thematically, rather than strictly chronologically. Each section will be ordered chronologically, but because the events, organizations, scientific developments, economic changes, and cultural shifts occurred in tandem but not necessarily in response to one another, I have chosen to collect them under the umbrella of four major areas of adolescent life and subjectivity that saw the most concerted controlling efforts: in how they were defined, in how development progressed, in how they spent their time and money, and in how their morals were formed. We will soon see that there is great overlap between these categories and that developments in one often influenced developments in another. This chapter should also not be seen as an attempt to catalog everything that occurred at this time; that is its own voluminous series yet to be written.

## 1.2. FROM YOUNG ADULT TO ADOLESCENT AND BACK

The term “young adult” can be traced back at least to educational theorist Sarah L. Trimmer’s magazine, *The Guardian of Education* (1802), in which Trimmer outlines a developmentally-inspired list of books for various age ranges. In addition to infancy and early childhood, Trimmer details “young adult” literature as works suitable for “eleven to

twenty-one years of age" (114). Since this early-nineteenth century enumeration of the category's boundaries, the only major change effected has been to reduce the top end from twenty-one to eighteen, in accordance with changing cultural attitudes and practices about the length of one's education. Well into the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for twenty and twenty-one year old students to be in the same schoolhouse as ten and eleven year olds, meaning that Trimmer's categorization serves a dual purpose of maintaining a singular reading list for the same educational group (which has further economic, pedagogical, and social benefits) while also codifying teaching and reading expectations for students who will be leaving school sometime in the next one to ten years. These pragmatic concerns were probably of more importance for Trimmer, advocating for large-scale standardization in freely available public education, than concerns about group identification; Trimmer was more concerned about literacy than enjoyment.

The term that is more commonly employed today and often considered unique to the mid-twentieth century, "young adult," is therefore actually older in the American tradition than what is now considered outdated, "adolescent literature." Usage of the term "young adult" in the early 19th century was more accurate than its usage during the 1960s. For Trimmer, "young adult" reading lists were aimed at *young* (ages fourteen to twenty-one) adults (students entering into the cultural status of "adulthood"). As adulthood was pushed back in the life span by the advent of compulsory education, anti-child-labor laws, and more stringent minimum-age laws for military service, "adulthood" moved from early adolescence to the end of the teenage years. However, as educational theorists and psychologists began to medicalize their respective professions, adopting the

language of the medical community--Latin--so too did they begin reconceptualize of these developmental categories. Young adulthood shifted into "adolescence" in the 1830s, adopting the Middle French term *adolescence* and honing its meaning as a descriptor of the time between childhood and adulthood.

As "young adult" did for Trimmer, "adolescence" has come to represent a developmental stage in the progression of childhood; the earliest uses of the term are nearly synonymous with juvenile and child, but its definition has changed over time. However, Trimmer's relatively benign description of literacy expectations gave way to a more problematic coding of teenage psychological tendencies, largely a result of the field in which the term was first adopted for an American context. As Crista DeLuzio explains, the development of discourse about adolescence emerged in "response to the changing experiences of young people in urbanizing, industrializing America" (258). During this time, DeLuzio explains, "often girls were ignored, excluded, or deemed deficient," and thus "notions of gender, race, and class figured into the scientific production of adolescence as a 'universal,' 'developmental' category that privileged maleness, whiteness, and middle-class status as its normative characteristics" (5). These claims to universality and developmentalism, Valerie Walkerdine argues, reproduce "a European patriarchal story, a story from the center which describes the periphery in terms of the abnormal, difference as deficiency" (453-454). These imperial beliefs, DeLuzio explains, influenced antebellum health reformers to delineate an "age of puberty" between childhood and adulthood. Basing their work on the implications of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*--namely, that forms of development were "organic, linear, hierarchical, and purposeful" (7)--these health reformers naturalized the expectation that

puberty was "both a problematic and an auspicious period of life, to be both managed and enabled by adults enlightened by scientific knowledge about human nature" (7). As one can imagine, those "enlightened" beliefs reproduced systems of racial, economic, and sexual privilege. As Kent Baxter reminds us, in the early twentieth century, Native American children were understood as essentially more "feral" beings than their white counterparts (12), their adolescence marked by more tribalism and struggle against systems of "civility."

Toward the end of the 19th century, the discourse on adolescence entered into psychoanalysis with William Burnham's 1889 paper, "Economy in Intellectual Work." In that essay, Burnham connects two conceptual categories many now view as inextricable: storm and stress (the German *Sturm und Drang*) and adolescence. A similar notion of adolescence as an inherently dangerous, painful, and psychologically scarring time was popularized in perhaps the most voluminous investigation into adolescence as a phase of cognitive development, Granville Stanley Hall's 1904 book, the two-volume *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, and Religion.*

In *Adolescence,* Hall connects his belief in authoritarian romanticism with his highly racialized, deeply flawed understanding of human cultural evolution, depicting the phases of human cognitive, emotional, and moral development as analogous to the march of cultural evolution. Inspired by Darwin's biological theories of natural selection--by the late-19th century already renamed "evolution"--Hall's theory of adolescence furthers his claim of genetic recapitulation: that the individual's growth is genetically linked to the development of society. Thus, the individual's development mirrors society's. Thus, the

individual grows from an essentially animal creature, through a period of savagery, into adolescence, in which "the higher and more completely human traits are now born" (xiii). Young children, in Hall's conception, are essentially animals. As they age, they turn into little savages: the only redeeming qualities they have are their curious nature and their willingness to adapt and bond in groups. Their savage ways must be "burned out" with the cleansing flame of charismatic adult leadership. For Hall, adolescence is the crucible in which childhood's ferality is eradicated, a time in which the developing adolescent mind must be subjected to extreme stress in order to build a stable foundation for adult character. Smelting of the developing child into needful materials is undertaken in the usual ways: corporal punishment, educational indoctrination into a cult of selflessness and sacrifice "for the greater good," physical exercise and bodily reshaping, and devotion to authority and the state.

For Hall, the natural experience of every adolescent undergoing this purification is one of distress. Hall characterizes the interior psychic life of adolescents as one of oscillation between contradictory tendencies. These "mood swings" transition between exaltation and lethargy, euphoria and melancholy, egoism and abasement, selfishness and altruism, virtuousness and sinfulness, gregariousness and seclusion, and cruelty and tenderness (Hall 33). The initial states, such as exaltation and selfishness, are associated with childhood and its unselfconscious pursuit of personal satisfaction. The terminal states, such as abasement and altruism, are associated with adult desires to mix with society. Thus, Hall contends, the adolescent undergoes a turbulent interior struggle to balance individual desire with the higher purpose of serving the community. Ultimately, a well-adjusted adolescent with strong adult oversight acquiesces to his or her yearning for

authority and overcomes their reckless need to resist it. The phoenix-like post-adolescent remnant that rises out of the ashes of its former self, for Hall, is the well-adjusted adult, who acts productively in a well-governed society.

Hall's work is important in the realm of psychology because, alongside the work of Sigmund Freud in his latter years, it brought the tripartite developmental model of childhood (juvenility, adolescence, and adulthood) into American folk psychology, how the general population thinks of the inner workings of the mind. Like Freud's work in theorizing the psychosexual developmental stages, Hall believed these interior shifts were phylogenetic: based upon a branching model of genetic evolution. Failures (and successes) could be traced to particular moments of decision, which meant they could be rectified with pointed therapeutic processes. Both also reinforced a basic definition of the adolescent as moody and unpredictable, given to instantaneous emotional changes, self-loathing, anxiety, and churlish attitudes toward work and authority. *Adolescence* was therefore meant to be a primer for social workers and educators in the United States. Nearly all of its first volume (save the curious final chapter, *Adolescence in Literature, Biography, and History*) is dedicated to medicalized understandings of the physical and biological changes of sexual maturation. The second volume, on the other hand, is almost entirely devoted to cataloging adolescent social behaviors, such as feelings and instincts (Chapter X), love (XI), attitudes about nature and "new education in science" (XII), "savage pubic initiations," ideals and customs, and church confirmation (XIII), "the adolescent psychology of education" (XIV), social instincts and institutions (XV), and finally intellectual development as it pertains to education (XVI). At the same time as they were embraced, Hall's twin volumes inspired ferocious controversy because of his

frank assessment of adolescent sexual desires and awakenings, as well as his implication that children were not so innocent after all--a concept directly opposed to the Victorian psychologists under whom he had trained in the late 1870s.

Even as it purported to delineate the mechanisms that governed growing up and the influences that could shape it, Hall's *Adolescence* also implanted his hierarchy of development with racialized metaphors of civility. Problematically, these metaphors have persisted unquestioned in the dominant paradigms of theory about adolescence until very recently. Judging by the terminology Hall uses, we can roughly sketch the hierarchy of child to adolescent to adult as similar to the education Anglo-saxon conception of racial relations, from indigenous person to nonwhite colonial to white settler. That is to say that the language Hall uses to describe children's proclivity for tribalism and simplistic cultural modeling is drawn directly from accounts of meetings between Europeans and native Western indigenous populations. Children are little savages who play at civilization. Adolescent are the somewhat more acculturated, but still considered as the inferior classes of nonwhite people whom the Europeans colonized in the 19th century. Adolescent/colonized culture is more securely founded, but still understood as inherently weaker than adult/white European culture. Finally, Hall's conceptions of adulthood and the duty of adults mimic the ways in which colonization was explained and excused by English settlers at the end of the 19th century. Terms like "burden," "duty," and "uplift" are frequently employed to describe the adult's task in raising the adolescent out of semi-cultural status and into fully-cultured self-actualization.

This explicit connection of the stages of development precursory to adulthood with "lesser" races is a theme that characterizes much of the literature about children and

adolescents for the next seventy years, when the first sustained work in children's literature would begin to address these depictions. There were, however, some notable attempts to resist this increasingly-dominant paradigm of thought, some from within the discourse of psychoanalysis (and the growing movement that would soon be called developmental psychology). Psychologist Leta Hollingworth posed the first major challenge to Hall's theory in her book, *The Psychology of the Adolescent* (1928). There, Hollingworth claims that Hall's idea of adolescence as a period of storm and stress "seem[s] of historic value primarily, rather than of scientific or practical value to-day" (ix). *The Psychology of the Adolescent* is written as a corrective measure to the problem that "much of our lore about adolescence rests at present upon the mere opinions of professional observers, rather than upon exact quantitative researches" (ibid.). Hollingworth is careful to note that her volume is merely "a formulation of the universal problems of the adolescent, as they appear at present, under conditions of temporary life" (ibid.). In this way, Hollingworth rejects Hall's attempts at vast, definitive characterizations, ensuring that her insights into the mechanisms of adolescence are understood as reflections of the current cultural climate. Hollingworth is also the first to contend that, rather than by sharp divisions, "the child grows by imperceptible degrees into the adolescent, and the adolescent turns by gradual degrees into the adult" (1). She notes that the difficulty of seeing these small changes is the root of much parental anxiety about the child's development, which in turn produces anxiety in the child turning adolescent (2).

Hollingworth's book is especially valuable as it marks one of the few entries in the history of the discourse on adolescence to note that the relation of adolescent

experience and initial reproductive maturity is largely conventional, not inherent (2). While many of her precursors in psychology, sociology, and health reform had attempted to demarcate “normative” child development--and by extension “normal” adolescence--Hollingworth considered the relationship between cultural experience and childhood change. Rather, Hollingsworth participated in a larger Progressive-era push in which theorists “used evolutionary theory to explain child development among ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized’ peoples” (DeLuzio, 7). Hollingworth maintains, unlike many others, that wide variance is possible in both of these developments, psychological and biological. Noting that menarche for girls can take place anywhere between the ages of eight and twenty-six, with the greatest concentrations between thirteen and sixteen (3), Hollingworth claims that this variance is often associated with intellectual capacity (4), with smarter girls reaching menstruation earlier. She contends additionally that cultural resistance to studying or codifying the markers of male puberty contribute to an equally inadequate portrait of when adolescence begins mentally or physically, and so it is often imposed on boys, rather than developed (5). Perhaps most importantly, however, Hollingworth notes two crucial components of adolescence: the power that social codes have on inducting them into it and the importance of individualization in moving through it. For Hollingworth, adolescence across cultures and times is marked indelibly by formal and informal celebrations and rites of passage. In the modern world, she writes, “there are many customary regulations concerning dress, diet, social intercourse, titles, manners and privileges, the abrogation of which marks the emergence from childhood” (30). As much as entrance into adolescence is modeled for the child by adults, it is “the importance of getting away from the family” that highlights positive self-actualization (36).

Hollingworth's most-reproduced chapter, "Psychological Weaning," suggests that since primitive times, "there is an urge which develops in every normal human being in the years between twelve and twenty, to get away from family supervision and become an independent person" (ibid.). This "psychological weaning" is the source of the emotional turmoil Hall identifies, Hollingworth explains, because "like [...] physical weaning [...] it may be attended by emotional outbursts or depressions, which are likely to come upon people whenever habits have to be broken" (ibid.). Thus, Hollingworth treats adolescence as having similar aims and reactions as both childhood and adulthood in a single statement. Just as the infant weaned from the breast throws a fit, so too does the adolescent weaned from the security of the family, and so too does the adult whose habits, such as smoking, are taken away without warning. Adolescence as it is perceived in the United States in 1928, then, is crucially *influenced by cultural expectations* inherent in the culture. It does not represent a universal experience of adolescence.

In the same year, anthropologist Margaret Mead, writing about her experiences in Samoa, stresses the importance of location and culture on coming-of-age ritual difference. Mead notes that adolescent experience in Samoa is not marked by normative emotional distress. Rather, "adolescence is not necessarily a specially difficult period in a girl's life" (197). Mead's groundbreaking work was the first to suggest openly that different civilizations regard--and therefore produce--adolescence differently. That is, "adolescence is not necessarily a time of stress and strain, but [...] cultural conditions make it so" (234). Discussing fundamental changes to the American educational system, Mead contends that "a society which is clamouring for choice [...] will give each new generation no peace until all have chosen or gone under" (235). Problematically,

adolescents are forced to bear the weight of major choices on their lives, from the vocation they will choose to the person they will marry, despite the fact "that they often have remarkably little choice" (235). American choices are restricted inevitably by education, location, and manual skill. And yet, Mead reminds her readers, "but small as is the number of the choices open to them in actuality, the significance of this narrow field of of opportunity is blurred by our American theory of endless possibilities" (236). For Mead, cognitive dissonance between actual breadth of choice and its portrayal as boundless is the root of most American adolescent anxiety, not strife between adolescent and family; conflict with the family is incidental as a result of discrepancies of perception (236-7).

As the conversation about adolescence in the United States began to bleed across ever wider professional organizations, social, political, cultural, and economic thinkers began to re-evaluate the role of the adolescent in everyday life. The 1930s and 1940s were characterized by a widespread restructuring of identity according to consumption. The "teenager," discussed "as early as the 1920s" by marketers and advertisers as a discrete social category (DeLuzio 236), soon became one of the most widely sought after marketing groups in the US. The targets of this marketing were, initially, white middle-class high school girls (DeLuzio 236), making them the "first teenagers." After the entry of marketing pressures into the discussion of adolescent development, adolescence became further demarcated into finer and finer subcategories, including pre-teens and tweens.

At the same time, social fears about juvenile delinquency at home began to build as the Great Depression left more young Americans aimless on the streets and

totalitarian, fascist regimes recruited young men in preparation for what would become the Second World War. Driven by a desire to understand the underlying mechanisms that made adolescents simultaneously yearn for freedom and relinquish it so easily, Lawrence K. Frank headed the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial and facilitated analysis of child development at major research university centers. Frank instituted the clinical practice that would define midcentury child psychology: the longitudinal study, following a group of children through their adolescent years in sustained examinations, in his attempts to understand why adolescents turned to rebellion and/or fascism in their quests for identity. As Crista DeLuzio reports, Frank's findings were surprising: he contended that adolescents simultaneously yearned for a primal need to individuate while also "keeping the centrifugal forces of individualism in check" through the "peer culture" of youth-driven youth culture (DeLuzio 239-40). Thus, adolescents functioned on a spectrum of pressures, ranging from full individuation to full servitude to a cause, and a careful modulation of these competing pressures was the key to what Frank considered correct development. In part because of philanthropic actions undertaken by the Rockefeller Institute and other organizations inspired by Frank, social groups for adolescents exploded in number in the 1930s and 1940s. These groups included those brokered by Roosevelt's New Deal, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (founded 1933) and the National Youth Administration (1935). Other organizations of a similar nature, some of which had been created prior to the Depression, nevertheless saw massive spikes in membership. These included groups like the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Young Men's Hebrew Association, and the Department of

Agriculture's 4-H Clubs (Reiman 3). This is just a small portion of the innumerable possible organizations one could join; community groups ranging from the neighborhood level to the state level abounded and dominated adolescent leisure time that once had been spent working. Youth organizations and the growth of so-called "youth culture" functioned both as a control mechanism over adolescent leisure time and as an important facet of normalizing a sense of communal belonging, both of which acted to stabilize and normalize certain adolescent experiences.

Even as adolescent leisure time was controlled by social organizations, increasing compulsory school attendance ages kept adolescents enrolled for longer. School enrollment rates increased from around 70% for whites and 60% for blacks of both sexes in 1930 to 90% across the board by 1972 (Goldin 66), thanks, in large part, to New Deal-era school construction projects and government mandates on compulsory education. This widespread high school attendance further delineated a progressive, developmental view of adolescence, now appended to an age-graded approach to teaching. Educational theorists, beginning with Arnold Gesell and his colleagues at the Yale Clinic of Child Development and the Gesell Institute of Child Development (founded in 1950), offered ever more intricate expositions of the "transitional years" of childhood (DeLuzio 237). Gesell's work attempted to redefine earlier attempts to document normative adolescent development, both physical and mental. In some ways, Gesell "undermined some of the 'loose, sweeping generalizations' about the adolescent epoch, particularly notions of its overwhelming turbulence and rebellious orientation" (DeLuzio 238). However, many of those insights, especially Gesell's critical analysis of the storm and stress of adolescence, were lost as he characterized normative adolescent growth as harmonization with deeply-

held laws and cycles of development (DeLuzio 238). Writing "in an era in which deviance of any kind was highly suspect," Gesell's ideas "appealed to parents seeking definitive answers about their adolescent children's normality and explanations for their adolescents' misbehavior in genetics [...] rather than their own poor parenting" (DeLuzio 238).

Ultimately, child psychology of midcentury would distill these two interrelated approaches into a singular formulation, one which simultaneously outlined a normative developmental model while also stressing the importance of frequent guidance in the adolescent developmental process. Erik H. Erikson's work, keenly aware of and derived from the groundwork laid by Hall, Hollingworth, Mead, Gesell, and Frank, as well as Anna Freud and Wilhelm Healy, painted a grim portrait of adolescent life gone astray. Erikson identified the "inability of wayward youth [in Nazi Germany] to resolve their identity crises successfully" as the catalyst for giving in to Hitler's incitement to nationalist, racist hatred (DeLuzio 242).[5] Seeing similar conditions as those that led to modern disillusionment at the turn of the twentieth century in Germany, Erikson believed adolescents "faced a similar danger of losing their individual identities and succumbing to conformist pressures, if not authoritarian demagogues than of a technological and bureaucratic social organization" (DeLuzio 242). The solution, for Erikson, lay in "the historic promise of America to sustain possibilities for choice, opportunity, dynamism, and tolerance in individual and social life" (DeLuzio 242). The most important task

[5] Erikson's statement is not politically neutral. Rather, it overlooks large-scale government interventions by the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and other Allied powers during the same period to exert control over youth identity through a nationalist lens. While Germany's nationalist agenda in the 1930s is well-documented, only recently have historians begun to unpack Allied nationalist recruitment. In addition to my efforts in chapter three to recover this information, see Valerie J. Matsumoto's *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*.

delivered unto the adults in charge of adolescent growth and development, then, was to maintain a suitably controlling while meaningfully liberating home, social, educational, and entertainment life for their children.

Notably, an unspoken theme dominates nearly all of these works, save Hollingworth and Mead's: that normative adolescent development is best embodied in the white, middle-class American boy. Certainly, the contentious relationship between self-fulfilment and social belonging--the storm and stress of normative adolescence--is widely understood as a *masculine* concern, which girls do not undergo. As DeLuzio reminds us, girls' development is relegated to its relationship to normative, here male, development of the adolescent subject (239). Class and race are further marginalized by their difference from the norm. More importantly, the core assumption underlying many midcentury theorists' claims about how to correctly progress through adolescence relies upon access to social, economic, and personal mobility. These were, before the 1960s, still widely reserved for middle-class white male subjects. Rather than be understood as a barrier to development that could be overcome through social change, young disenfranchised people were misconstrued as lazy and unintelligent at best and shiftless or rebellious at worst. The mask of privilege prevented many of the beneficiaries of these theories from seeing the racial, economic, and social systems that allowed them the freedom to choose their lives. Othering those who chafed at the system further marginalized those left out of it, all but obliterating them from the conversation.

## 1.3. CONTROLLING STORM AND STRESS

Both Hollingworth and Mead would come to be recognized as titans in their respective fields. Hollingworth's text supplanted Hall's in psychology departments nationwide, and Mead's first foray into cultural anthropology remains widely regarded as the single most important text of that field in the twentieth century. However, their combined narratives of adolescent experience as a product of overwhelming cultural expectations proved too critical to be adopted into folk psychology. Indeed, both came after multiple efforts in the early twentieth century to control perceived adolescent hostility, and working against those governmental, religious, educational, and familial structures proved difficult. As Kent Baxter explains in *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (2008), adolescence came to represent all that was feared of wayward youth: without guidance and control, juveniles with too much time on their hands would turn inevitably to sin and profligacy. Thus, compulsory education laws in the United States, which Baxter notes had been tested on the recently subjugated peoples of Native American tribes at government-funded and -mandated tribal schools, were used broadly as a method of controlling both adolescent time and adolescent thought and inculturation. The same racially-charged rhetoric deployed by Hall to make his case for the savagery of the adolescent was explicitly appended to justifications for broad federal controls on Native American reservations. These controls have had the effect, over more than a century, of nearly eradicating American Indian beliefs about rites of passage and coming of age in favor of Anglo-centric ones. In this way, the school, as a representative of the federal government's attempted destruction of their culture, becomes in Native American writing a bastion of

contempt. That this characterization is renewed in the 1950s in films like *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without a Cause* reinforces the rhetoric of racial control translated easily into concerns about white adolescent behavior.

Outside the walls of the school or church, perhaps the most widespread attempt to control adolescent time and energy was the Scouting movement, started in the United States by Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, author of *Scouting for Boys* (1908) and first chief scout of the Boy Scouts of America. Scouting movements, generally begun in the United States between 1904 and 1910, were immediately popular and have continued to grow. These new cultural institutions were designed to combat a perceived softening of the average child at the hands of modern conveniences, a task they carried out in woodland camps with paramilitary precision. In this way, scouting movements and Hall's conceptualization of the purposes of adolescent education and control shared ideals and aims: to physically mold the adolescent through vigorous activity, to enmesh them into social groups in which cooperation was necessary for success, to initiate them into moral and civic responsibilities of the American public, and, most outwardly, to ensure a measure of adult control over the procedure of their development. However, Hall's conceptualization of the ideal adolescent education was modeled on the German *Volk* movement, which preached anti-individualism and romantic populism rooted in ethno-nationalistic assumptions about blood purity. As much as nationalism played a role in scouting, individualism proved the method by which scouting attempted to forge a stronger national youth.[6] Modeled after the military scouting preparations that many of

[6] Scouting in the United States and England were very similar in their rendering of personal achievement as glorious but always secondary to troop success. It may be contrasted with the German *Wandervogel* movement (literally, "rambling bird"), which emphasized freedom and self-responsibility.

their founders underwent in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, scouts utilized a stratified hierarchy of achievement and responsibility, measured with visible ranking methods (patches, sashes, and so forth) while teaching a paramilitary set of skills: wilderness survival, watercrafting, first aid, hunting and shooting, and a blend of self-sufficiency and dependency on the unit. Scouting was buttressed by widespread cultural conservatism, especially in the United States, and most vocally by president Theodore Roosevelt. In 1900, Roosevelt gave his famous speech "Strenuous Life" speech to a male, mostly adolescent group of socialites at Chicago's famous men's club, the Hamilton Club. In that speech, Roosevelt lamented the deteriorating position of the United States in the global eye, chalking it up to the prevalence of easy living that was paradoxically afforded to affluent Americans precisely because of their global dominance. It was a boy's civic duty, for Roosevelt, to lead a strenuous life: that is, to use struggle and stress as a catalyst out of the impertinent and lazy ways of youth into the industrious and serious departments of adulthood. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the notion of adolescent life of one that adopted struggle as the means to a fully-realized adult selfhood was perhaps overdetermined by the institutions of education, leisure, and government.

Importantly, I must note that Roosevelt's interpretation of the strenuous life as essentially mandated for *boys* was a reaction to widespread concerns about the feminization of American society. Led by cultural critics like Henry James--who, Beverly Lyon Clark reminds us, was also partly responsible for the dismissal of women's writing and children's literature as sentimentalist and therefore unliterary--the belief was that, alongside industrialization, the nation's boys were growing soft. Soft boys, Roosevelt

thought, would not be tough enough to survive the savagery of adolescent growth and development, yielding weak men. Terminology about softness and weakness is usually coded as a male individual's ability to *assert himself*—that is, to exert control on the world around him rather than be controlled by it.

This creates an ironic paradox that Hall and other scientists never truly address. Ostensibly, according to Hall's theory, *boys* are the adolescents who prove most difficult to control in nearly all conceptions of adolescence in the early 20th century. They are, supposedly, inherently difficult to control. Yet, this is meant to be a positive identity trait in men, something to be developed and strived for. Later work by sociologists, particularly through the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, would attempt to reconcile this paradox by instilling into children, especially boys, a desire for communal belonging. Communal belonging was often reflected in "fitting in" or appealing to normative beliefs and expectations. Women and girls, by nature of their more social and acquiescent nature, ostensibly took to a firm hand more readily than the rebellious child. As usual, experience did not align with theory: girls' scouting ventures like Camp Fire and the Girl Scouts eschewed many traditionally feminine qualities in favor of self-reliance, strength, and resilience. In a covert subversion, many girls' scouting groups identified themselves as the true protectors of the nation, and their efforts to create communities of empowerment within strict gender codes demonstrate this. The sheer prominence of iconoclastic gender-bending in children's literature of the 1920s and 1930s, coupled with the New Woman and the vote show that girls and women of the turn of the century took Roosevelt's blindness to their abilities to heart.

## 1.4. CAPTURING LEISURE TIME AND LEISURE DOLLARS

Not all adolescents took part in the community-building institutions that sought to shape their development, such as the aforementioned scouting movements and their religious counterparts, youth ministry groups. The explosive growth of "youth culture" after the turn of the century was a thinly-veiled attempt to control juvenile downtime and shape minds that were largely understood to be vulnerable, and it took many forms. But publishers had been catering to youths for a long time, even if they did not yet have the impressively well-funded marketing departments to clearly demarcate texts for children and texts for adults. Curation of youth taste had long been a project for publishers, from the penny dreadfuls of the 1830s, to the adventure novels and travelogues of the 1850s and 1860s, to the dime novels of the 1860s and 1870s. Most readers by the 1890s had been raised on (and, in turn, raised their children on) popular prototypical American young adult novels such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* series (1868-1908), and most recently Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).[7] Pulp publishing, established in 1896 with the creation of the *Argosy Magazine*, challenged the extant literary tradition of the mid-to-late-19th century with cheap, disposable, often illustrated, lurid short stories. The first color pulps came in 1903 with *The Popular Magazine*, which

[7] In this list, I consciously exclude the influence of the "Golden Age" British novels for children, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), and Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). One could argue for their inclusion, but I contend that American publishing for young readers is dominated by a fascination with adolescence and rebellion in ways that British fiction never truly replicates. I suppose it makes sense given the relationship between Britain and its former colonies.

published literary authors like H. Rider Haggard (*She*, 1886) and established nonliterary authors like Robert E. Howard (*Conan the Barbarian*, 1932).

Pulp fiction publishing became so expansive and pervasive in culture that, to compensate, writers of juvenile fiction had to participate in it or write away from it, to the upper classes. Booth Tarkington's sardonic *Penrod* series (1914-1931) and *Seventeen* (1916) shifted literary tastes in the juvenile novel up the economic ladder, settling in the upper-middle-class with *Alice Adams* (1921) and *Gentle Julia* (1922). At the same time, cheaper publication methods enabled an explosion in serial novels, especially those aimed at young people. Called the Rockefeller of literature by *Fortune* magazine and raised on Alger and William T. Adams's rags-to-riches novels, Edward Stratemeyer created the enormous Stratemeyer Literary Syndicate in 1905. The Syndicate is credited with the creation of some of the longest-lived children's literature series, including *The Bobbsey Twins* (72 volumes, 1904-1992), *Tom Swift* (more than 100 volumes, 1910-2007), *The Hardy Boys* (more than 100 volumes, 1927-present), and *Nancy Drew* (more than 100 volumes, 1930-present). Straddling the line between children's (*Bobbsey Twins*) and adolescent literature, the Stratemeyer Syndicate paved the way for the chapter-book craze that has characterized publishing for youth readers in the 20th century.

Pulp magazines saw a dramatic deterioration in sales, driven by paper shortages and consequent higher prices. Taking their place at newsstands in the postwar 1940s were youth-centric nonliterary magazines, such as *Teen* and *Seventeen*. These "slicks"--so-called for their glossy photo paper--took over the market quickly as they appealed to newly-affluent middle-class readers. Slicks producers, including *Harper's, Vanity Fair, Vogue*, and *The Saturday Evening Post,* extended their reach into teen publishing to fill

the void left by pulp magazines immediately following World War II. Produced almost purely by adults for an adolescent audience, these publications nevertheless affected a kind of authenticity through the use of still-powerful mechanisms, such as surveys of "real teens" and focus-pieces on popular careers at the time, such as nurses and mechanics. Inevitably, these works sought to shape teen fashion, musical tastes, leisure-time activities, and indeed sexuality and behavior. In keeping with the restricted moral values of the time, the publications suggested demur behavior by girls toward their men--and indeed, always men. *Seventeen, Teen, Girls' Life, American Cheerleader, Sassy,* and *Young Miss* dominated the scene, although new magazines sprung up nearly monthly to compete for the newly-affluent postwar teen dollar. Slicks for boys ranged from hobbyist magazines, such as *Popular Mechanics,* to story magazines including *Weird Tales* and *Boys' Life*. Around sixteen, most boys "graduated" to *Hot Rod* and *Gentlemen's Quarterly* and *Esquire*. Guys were told to act tough but have a sensitive side, to be a little rebellious but respectful of her parents, to pay for the date, and be otherwise a courtly lover. No aspect of their lives and leisure went undiscussed.

When not being discussed in the voluminous pages of teen magazines, Hollywood films were happy to help as purveyors of "good teen behavior." Sensationalist films of the 1930s (*Wild Boys of the* Road, 1933; Reefer Madness, 1936) contrasted with the deliriously popular, straight-laced *Andy Hardy* films (1937-1946) in a tug-of-war between anxiety about teenage foolishness and the Hardy family's moral absolutism. However, this was just a precursor to the true explosion of teen anxiety sensationalism that was the middle of the 20th century. Films of the 1950s depicted the dangers of unchecked juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, disrespect for authority, and deviance

from the norm. These films included mainstream titles such as *The Wild One* (1954), the aforementioned *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and *The Delinquents* (1957), as well as B-movies like *Glen or Glenda* (1953) and *Teenagers From Outer Space* (1959). All manner of poor teen behavior was on display, from transvestism to casual necking. As Kent Baxter reminds us in *The Modern Age: Turn-of-the-Century American Culture and the Invention of Adolescence* (2008), any notions of adolescent nature that come out of the 20th century are reflections of cultural anxieties, namely that the youth of the time faced no true, catalyzing rites of passage that would usher them into adulthood (12). The proliferation of these depictions in the 1950s is therefore the crystallization of years of building concern, rather than a sudden attempt to make sense of a wild demographic. Rather, the confluence of various media formats at this time, including film, print culture, and literature, suggests a large-scale, calculated attempt to reinforce cultural attitudes about the potential--and its inherent dangers--of adolescence. For Burnham and Hall, youth without cultural rites would be aimless, but through their aimlessness, with the proper tutelage and enforcement, they could be driven (naturally, evolutionarily) to purification. For midcentury critics, youth without morals would eradicate American society. Youth culture, imposed from above and in various realms--educational, moral, commercial, familial--therefore sought to encapsulate, divide, gauge, and control the forces that would shape the next generation of Americans.

It may seem as though the newsstand, with its slick magazines and pulpy comic books, or the cinema, with its flashy displays of teenage bad boys and hot rodders, dominated teen culture in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. But let us not forget that those "floppies" (as they were sometimes called then on account of their less than rigid literary

qualities, not to mention their physical properties) and “movies” were the targets of significant ire from adult interlocutors (as we shall see shortly in the discussion of morals). Parents still thrust good, old-fashioned books on their kids. As subsequent chapters will show, books from this period have significant relevance in the history of how young adult literature became a dominant market force, but they remain understudied in part because of the midcentury hullabaloo about loose leaves and loose morals. Texts like *Caddie Woodlawn* (1935) would serve as dramatizations of the teenage girl’s place in the economic and social systems of the United States during and after the Great Depression, while comic books like *Captain America Comics* would inculcate male readers into the nationalist system of self-sacrifice via military service or participation in a culture of surveillance and self-policing. Even books that took a satirical stand against the commodification of alienation, such as J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), would ultimately fall victim to the very commodification it fought against, becoming a unifying voice of the adolescent it sought to mock.

## 1.5. SHAPING MORALS

Socio-cultural concerns are most readily revealed in popular media creations, especially those that are understood to be ephemeral or at the very least inconsequential, such as newspapers and newspaper comic strips. Created weekly (sometimes daily), these fleeting artistic endeavors were prime movers in broaching difficult topics milling about the cultural psyche; read as pure entertainment and rarely retained by the average reader for more than a day (except to line animal cages), newspapers and the strips that graced them were simultaneously some of the most widely-read writings for the early twentieth-

century American and also the least memorable. As the most prominent piece of printed matter in American media, the newspaper offered a unique opportunity for cultural examination that would, nevertheless, be forgotten as the march of paper went on. This unique position of frequent exposure and relative protection from retaliation (thanks to free speech protections on journalism) offered to newsprint the same freedom of expression as the nineteenth century's political cartoons.

The late-nineteenth and early twentieth century saw explosive proliferation of comic strips in an attempt to catch the attention (and income) of illiterate and immigrant America consumers. Kim Munson explains that "Joseph Pulitzer, [seeking] a way to differentiate himself from his competition and find new readership [...] printed *The New York World's* first Sunday comics supplement on November 18, 1894" (20-1). William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the competing *New York Journal*, "stole Outcault away, and the creation of other popular strips for Hearst soon followed, such as the *Katzenjammer Kids* and *Happy Hooligan*" (21). Soon, comics appeared in almost all Sunday newspaper editions. Acting as a kind of print-media court jester, newspaper comic strips could freely couch politicized messages in (sometimes) wholesome packages. Thus, reading these news strips for evidence of shifting twentieth-century attitudes toward adolescence allows strangely unfettered access to a particular cultural moment, mediated as it is through the double lens of the creator's beliefs and the concerns of mass-market appeal. Comic strips proved so popular and so effectively aimed at their lower-class readers that, in 1909, the *Ladies' Home Journal* excoriated them as "an influence for repulsive and often depraving vulgarity so colossal that it is rapidly taking on the dimensions of nothing short of a national crime against our children"

(Hajdu 12). Similar denunciations by artistic guilds, literary magazines, and other gatekeepers of "high-brow" culture appeared and were summarily ignored by newspapers, except as an excuse to purchase and print even more comic strips.

Comic strips grew so popular that reprinting them as collections, a practice that continues today, became an easy way for publishers who already owned the rights to their dispersal to make a second round of profits. Beginning in the 1930s, books of reprinted comic strips sold for a penny, a nickel, or a dime apiece at newsstands, next to the newspapers where the latest strip could be found for pocket lint. Sometimes, the strips were purchased wholesale and given away by companies as goodies in boxes of cereal, as prizes for write-in contests, or as an attendant to America's first junk food, Cracker Jacks. Like the strips found in newspapers, reprinted books of comic strips stood apart from traditional publications because they occupied a marginalized position in the American publishing mind, which allowed them a modicum of freedom of expression. Most importantly, they offered a rare opportunity for adults to address adolescents beyond the scope of otherwise constant supervision. A child with a dime could buy just about any comic book they wished, as the newspaper attendants working the stands were themselves often neither highly-educated nor particularly concerned about the "ten-cent plague" they peddled to adolescents day after day. But most importantly, during this time the only critics of child consumption of comic books were the cultural institutions that controlled every other aspect of their lives: schools and churches. Literary critic Sterling North complained that comics would "strain young eyes and ruin their perception of color" (Munson 23); the National Organization for Decent Literature proselytized to the faithful by offering lists of forbidden comic books. But few of the lower-class folks on

the streets took notice of these relatively fringe complaints from upper-crust Americans. After all, who really believes the stuff they publish in the funnies?

In the 1930s and 1940s, the most common purchaser of comic books was "the juvenile," or kids aged ten to fifteen. However, after rising paper prices nearly destroyed the pulp-story market and slicks took over the newsstand, the pulp comic book was produced in part to salvage publishing machinery that had not been sold to newsprint agencies. Comics soon became just as popular amongst adult readers, especially less-than-perfectly literate immigrants, as they were amongst kids. These cheap comics sold remarkably even during the Great Depression. The first "comic books" to hit newsstands, Eastern Color Printing's *Funnies on Parade* (1933), paved the way as free giveaways in Procter & Gamble products; a year later, "Maxwell Charles Gaines placed ten-cent stickers on *Famous Funnies* and had them sell out on newsstands. [...] [T]he comic book industry was born" (Clark and Howard, 6). Just four years later, in 1938, Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster's *ubermensch* Superman would become the most significant comic figure of all time, appearing in the most important comic book of all time, *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938) (Clark and Howard 7). The unexpected success of Superman ushered in a so-called "Golden Age" that would bring what had once been the kind of "juvenile pap" stuffed into cereal boxes to national prominence. This "Era of Proliferation" (Duncan and Smith, 23) exposed millions of impressionable young minds to the fantastic stylings of pauper *uber*-immigrants, vigilante playboys, and weaklings-turned-supersoldiers: just the sort of role models Hall and his colleagues feared most.

To make matters worse, such ridiculously cheap paper was easy to manufacture in mass quantities and ship all over the world, from Air Force bases in not-yet-American-

Alaska to top-secret Allied bases in the Antarctic. The same cheap and so efficient production qualities that had saved the format during the Great Depression helped comic books to dominate the subliterary sales market during World War II rationing efforts while maintaining a low cover price. Sold equally to service-age men and adolescents, the comic books soon became to the juvenile storytelling landscape what the pulp novel was to adult storytelling: largely considered useless pap (Eisner 3). Just like their pulp fiction counterparts, comics were easily folded into a back pocket, slipped inside a textbook, or tossed away with only a day's allowance as sacrifice, and more copies could be procured at any newsstand on any street corner for a pittance (Sommers viii).

Because they represented, to some critics, unfiltered access to juvenile minds, it was clear that comic books had to be dangerous. The attentiveness of the newsstand clerk was all that prevented children from reading the war comics, detective stories, and horror pages popular among servicemen, and that attention was limited and easily misdirected by pals. In 1954, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham released *Seduction of the Innocent*, a research document that purported to demonstrate the mind-destroying and morality-eroding nature of comic books. Written after six years as an expert witness in juvenile delinquency, Wertham's book ostensibly came in response to growing fears from adults that comic books were causing unspeakable behaviors in teens. Wertham reportedly received dozens of letters from librarians and hundreds from teachers and parents imploring him to intervene. Featuring on its cover a wide-eyed child, apparently looking through blinds on a horrific scene, *Seduction of the Innocent* lays out many claims about comic books and their threat to the sanctity of children's and adolescents' mental safety. Much of what Wertham identified as seditious or dangerous was, in fact, probably true:

he stated, for example, that Wonder Woman featured sadomasochistic bondage subtext, a feature that Wonder Woman creator William Moulton Marston has readily acknowledged. He identified a homoerotic subtext to Batman and Robin's relationship, a facet that has been played with in underground comix and more adult takes on the Dynamic Duo more or less ever since Robin's introduction. He claimed that Superman was an un-American fascist--truly seditious in the midst of the House on Un-American Activities hearings--which has spawned at least two specifically fascist iterations: a communist in Russia, featured in *Superman: Red Son* (2003) and Overman (a literal translation of *ubermensch*), a Nazi Superman (2007).

Wertham's objections to comics were made categorically on the basis of the behaviors they would inspire. That is, he saw them as a poor chaperone for the idle time of their juvenile readers. Taking umbrage not only with depictions of lesbianism (Wonder Woman, again) and vigilantism (Batman and Robin, again), Wertham also rejected the advertisement of air rifles and knives in the back pages of the comics, the use of terrifying imagery in horror comics, and the widespread depiction of corruption of government officials, police, and other authority figures (especially psychiatrists, like himself). Exposure to these images, Wertham contended frequently, would cause their replication in the maturing adolescent. He cited hundreds of cases of children being driven to violence, rape, and unnecessary questioning of authority because of their frequent exposure to comics. As one of the most visible pundits on the topic of the dissolution of childhood morality and the sanctity of the family, Wertham's message was heard. In September 1954, comics publishers created their self-governing body, The Comics Code Authority (CCA), to craft publication guidelines for member publishers.

Though they never went so far as to call it censorship--which, of course, was associated with fascistic regimes--the CCA ruled over comics publishing with a punishing hand for more than two decades. Headed by a specialist in juvenile delinquency, Charles F. Murphy, the organization created a code of ethics and standards for the industry that included such guidelines as never showing authority as corrupt (unless it is justly repaid for its corruption), and never showing that crime pays (even vigilantism). Larger bans on what could and could not be portrayed were instituted as well; naughty "good girl art," blood and gore, drug paraphernalia, vampires, werewolves, and zombies all made the list.

Even as it purported to protect innocent youth from being led into moral profligacy, the CCA reproduced many of the racial and economic prejudices of the time through its censorship. Perhaps the worst instance of this was with the challenging of the EC Comics reprint "Judgement Day," a pre-Code comic dated April 1953 and reprinted in February 1956. The comic laments the current (1953) atmosphere of racial prejudice and violence before depicting, in its final panel, a black astronaut looking down on his beset homeworld. The work was challenged not for its scathing indictment of racial prejudice in the United States, but solely for its depiction of a black astronaut, something Charles F. Murphy could not conceive of as realistic enough to print. After threats to expose the CCA as an essentially racist organization, Murphy relented, and the comic was reprinted. Beyond controlling what could and could not be depicted, the CCA did little to change the way that comics were sold or marketed, and children still had more or less unfettered access to what racy comics were printed without the CCA's approval--depending, of course, on whether the newsstand attendant paid attention or cared. Wertham blasted the creation of the CCA as a half-solution that failed to address other

issues, such as advertisements for weapons and such inappropriate back-catalogue fare as X-ray goggles offering teens the ability to surreptitiously peep under blouses.

It is not surprising that, following the release of Wertham's papers and documents for his works in 2010, inconsistencies in his findings were reported. Carol Tilley, initially searching only for the widely-cited letters to Wertham from concerned librarians, discovered not only that most of those letters were lost (or never existed), but that the case files Wertham based his book upon were of suspect quality. An example in *Seduction* of a boy who loved Batman and went on to become homosexual, Tilley found, was almost completely altered from actual findings. The boy actually loved Superman, "Crime Does Not Pay" comics, and war comics over Batman. More importantly, however, the boy had been sexually assaulted by an older boy prior to speaking with Wertham. Indeed, the majority of his case files were from urban New York youth who had recorded histories of physical and sexual abuse, and much of the information was tailored to suit Wertham's contentions. Tilley notes that "from a contemporary standpoint, 'Seduction' is horribly written because it's not documented" (1). Indeed, Tilley discovered that far outweighing the epistolary evidence of adults fearing for their children's safety were letters *from children* to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, calling for protection of their comic books. "Some of them talked about fairy tales and folk tales, Poe and Shakespeare, and said this stuff has murder and sex and traumatic events too, but you call that good literature" (3), Tilley explains, indicating that children knew and understood that adult actions "in their best interests" were actually coded attempts to control their leisure time.

## 1.6. A UNITED FRONT: HOW THE YOUNG ADULT ESTABLISHMENT CAME TO BE

It is easy to see how G. Stanley Hall's notions of an innocent childhood, followed by the dangerous potentiality of adolescence, might be threatened by weakening social structures of enforcing moral and ethical codes. For Hall, social institutions like the family, the church, and the school were of critical importance in ensuring that the naturally unstable potency of adolescent desire was urged in directions that would allow for fully-realized selfhood and positive citizenship. Hall and Wertham are equally concerned by a perceived plague of juvenile delinquency, though each one saw different problems in the adolescents around him. Hall saw the dangers that uncontrolled nonwhite populations and immigrant populations posed to American identity. Without undergoing the rites and rituals of the nation, how could those people be expected to become good citizens that would ensure America's national safety and progress? Built upon the imperialist belief in "the white man's burden," Hall reproduced an Anglocentric conception of civility that called on Enlightened white men to patriarchally govern the less-civilized masses. Fifty years later, Wertham saw the decay of morality and the reduced value of family time, religious observance, and personal temperance as the evils that would topple the nation. Looking toward the future generations, Wertham saw an opportunity to right what he saw as the wrongs of urban life: rampant promiscuity, hedonism, and violence. What most strongly characterizes the through line of adolescent culture over the fifty years between Hall and Wertham is this concern: how can the caretakers of the nation's heritage imbue in its adolescent subjects the necessary respect and reverence for American culture?

As the century went on, representations of this central problem evolved as the gaps between child, adolescent, and adult widened. What had been an economically-divided approach to curating adolescent taste in the 1930s and 1940s changed as the American middle class came to prominence and affluence in the 1950s and 1960s. That more working-class adolescents were mixing in schools with newly middle-class, staunchly middle-class, and upper-middle-class peers strengthened the movement to control all teen minds. In fact, depictions of the dangers of contact between rebellious lower-class delinquents and vulnerable upper-class teens grew to be one of the most popular filmic narratives of the 1950s and 1960s, especially as the teen market's size exploded after the Baby Boom. This encapsulation of cultural anxieties into a popular medium showed how deeply concerns about newfound class mixing ran. As such, what had been fringe movements by the National Organization for Decent Literature and other religious organizations came to the forefront in spirit. The goal was to ensure protection of values in all aspects of the teen's life. More frequent opportunities for exploration in their growing leisure time meant more control than ever over teenage freedom.

Because of these growing anxieties about more frequent opportunities to explore their personal liberty, the already outmoded psychological concepts I examined earlier in this chapter made a stunning resurgence. Driven by "new" translations of German psychological authorities and a widening gap in taste between adults and teens, parental misunderstandings of teenage emotional turmoil quickly reverted to the adolescent as being inherently unstable. However, in reconsidering the work of some fifty years prior, parents, educators, librarians, and psychologists took note of some elements of the corrective theories posited by scholars like Hollingworth, Mead, and others, including

lapsed Freudian psychoanalyst Otto Rank. Rank had suggested in the 1930s that the true cause of adolescent unrest was a core struggle of wills, between the will of the individual and the social will. Rank contended that the adolescent naturally resisted authority at all levels, whether external (in the form of rules) or internal (from instincts and drives) in an attempt to realize individuation. When Rank's work was translated into English in the 1940s by his disciple, Jessie Taft, it went almost completely unrecognized. Rank had been cast out of the psychological establishment by Freud after a fundamental disagreement about whether repression or expression was the primary aim of the human heart. It was not until his theories about personal struggle were embraced by the Gestalt psychotherapists of the 1950s that his notions would come to prominence. When that happened, the fate of adolescence as inherently stressful was sealed.

Gestalt therapy collected many broadly-defined concepts of psychoanalysis into the client-therapist exchange. Most important among these variegated concepts is the *self.* Gestalt therapy, for the first time in psychology, posits that there is an inherent conceptualization of one's identity--the self--which lies in contrast to one's conceptions of other identities--the other. This psychological depiction of absolute difference is used to determine how well a person reacts to the situations and expectations placed upon them. Too little self-determination results in chaotic behavior; too much rigid self-determination results in inflexibility and an inability to adapt. American culture immediately absorbed this idea and deployed it as an explanation for the importance of control, conformity, and containment of difference as a method of protecting American interests. For adolescents, this mechanism manifested in an especially sinister way: the paradox of change. In Gestalt therapy, the more one attempts to change, the more one

stays the same. Staying "true" to oneself is the only correct path to change, wholeness, and growth. That is to say that, under Gestalt psychology, growth requires acceptance of one's situation, rather than striving to be different. This paradox was co-opted as a method of snuffing out rebellious tendencies, delinquent behavior, and nonconformity in all its guises.

As this chapter suggests, the work of cultural change was wrought over nearly four decades of sustained effort, from the late 1920s to the late 1960s. In the coming chapters, I show how each work or sequence of works builds upon the aims of the previous decade to concretize the approved methods of self-discovery that would become the norm by the 1960s, culminating with the creation of the Young Adult Services Division and the publication of *The Outsiders,* perhaps the first piece of "officially-sanctioned" young adult literature. To do that, we must fundamentally alter the way that we define young adult literature, leaving behind the marketing terminology that presupposes a category of people--already widely discussed, theorized, and enmeshed into society by 1967--had suddenly arrived in need of media to support their lives. The first step is to re-examine works from the years once understood as barren years of cultural production for young adults, the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, to better understand how authors and illustrators worked in tandem with public intellectuals to publicize and popularize a new conception of adolescence and build the iconic American adolescent.

# CHAPTER 2. HOW THE NEW DEAL CHANGED YOUNG ADULTHOOD

"That she should be such a hoyden as to neglect her proper duties as a lady!"
- Harriet Woodlawn (*Caddie Woodlawn,* 212)

As I outlined in the last chapter, scientific and professional discourses concerning the child began in the 20th century to segregate childhood into a sequence of developmental categories. As a result, the portrait of childhood became more complex thanks to increasingly nuanced research into the physical, behavioral, social, and mental needs of the developing child. As the discourses surrounding childhood development grew, so too did the influence exerted by their findings. It was not long before other areas of society began to recognize the many faces of childhood and to weave those features into the larger cultural fabric of the United States. Children went from being invisible to being the center of national attention. Perhaps the most fertile ground for change was in the emerging economy of materialism, by which American subjects could reinforce conceptualizations of themselves through the purchasing of goods, rather than the demonstration of skills, knowledge, and experience. No other group would come to be the face of materialism in the US like middle-class, white adolescents, especially teenage girls. And just as adolescents would soon become a repository for concerns troubling the nation's adults, by midcentury the adolescent would also represent the greatest forces of change in the American cultural landscape, both economic and cultural.

Change, however, takes time. In the 1920s and 1930, popular conceptualizations of adolescence were still in their infancy, relegated primarily to the dusty pages of sociological treatises on Samoan girls and not yet widely considered in the popular imagination. Adolescents were either older children or younger adults, and so too were methods of guiding adolescent subjectivity mostly limited to extensions of childhood or

preparation for adulthood. During the latter years of the Great Depression, however, a seemingly coincidental trend in publishing would prove a harbinger of a new era of consumerism and of the adolescent for the United States. Between 1934 and 1939, a small group of seemingly out-of-place narratives about tomboys would sweep the Newbery Honor Medal, the distinctly American award in the canon of publishing for children. At the same time, major overhauls to economic policy in the US, including labor laws and welfare systems, would work to segregate childhood from adolescence and adolescence from adulthood on the national stage. For perhaps the first time in American history, novels would depict the shift not from childhood to adulthood, but from childhood to adolescence.

The Depression's impact on publishing in the US has been studied to some degree. By and large, however, studies of how the Depression arises in texts for children overlook crucial economic developments. More commonly, research into the Depression focuses on the emergence of radicalism in literature for children, a distinctly conservative publishing sphere, or on the mysterious emergence of well-crafted, colorful picturebooks in an otherwise austere time in American publishing. The scholarship that does address the most obvious concern of the time, the economy, discusses the largely didactic books produced as a result of publicly-funded initiatives like the Works Progress Administration's Project One, or otherwise focuses on how these narratives reinforce the importance of individual integrity and resilience combined with social responsibility and democracy as methods of survival. However, few if any examinations of children's literature from the Depression takes on the actual changes occuring in the economy, or the more frequently felt ramifications of those changes, in labor. It is my contention that

the large group of economic and cultural legislative acts crafted by Franklin D. Roosevelt, more commonly conflated as The New Deal, played a key role in the isolation of adolescence from the rest of the developmental timeline. It executed this differentiation primarily on the basis of labor. Tomboy narratives, as interlocutors in the relationship between masculine and feminine work and their respective value in the family (and by extension the nation) are a proving ground for evolving ideas about the labor of children, adolescents, and adults. Their unprecedented dominance of the American children's book market from 1933 to 1939 underlined one of the most pressing questions of the time: what, after all, is the role of girls in the "work" that must be undertaken to rescue the nation from the "Dirty Thirties"? These novels thereby reflect larger cultural concerns about children's labor in general, but most especially the labor of girls and women. In this chapter, I examine how works of children's literature during this time promulgated the growing divide between children and adolescents as distinct demographic groups with distinct needs and expectations. One tomboy novel in particular, Carol Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn* (1935), demonstrates new attitudes about children and labor.

In order to examine how authors during the late years of the Great Depression grasped the changing value of young people's labor, we must first look at the flurry of executive orders and legislative acts that enabled the United States to emerge from the economic wasteland of the Depression, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Though some of the acts were aimed specifically at children as citizen-subjects, by and large the child--and, increasingly as a separate category, the adolescent--were primarily affected tangentially by the New Deal. As a whole, New Deal efforts acted as a catalyst that

solidified earlier contentions about adolescents as subjects: first, that they are distinct from children; second, that they are still minors and therefore distinct from adults; third, that they require guidance especially suited to their particular situation between these groups; and fourth, to an exponentially increasing degree as the 1930s continued, that adolescence is the time in which adult habits are developed and set. Many of the New Deal acts I detail in the following pages will demonstrate the expansion of these ideas into systemic, government-sanctioned policy.

## 2.1. CHILD WELL-BEING, CHILD LABOR, AND THE NEW DEAL

For much of the nation's history, the labor of children was not significantly different than that of adults, especially when the country was largely frontier. But as the boundaries pushed ever westward and the United States grew, industrialized, and urbanized, the same economic pressures that drove adult Americans off of farms and into material-gathering jobs in mines and manufacturing jobs at factories also meant more children worked off the homestead. Following timeless traditions of apprenticeship, many adolescent children, as young as ten, worked in hard labor positions to bring additional income to the family. Increasingly, these practices came under scrutiny as concerned citizens, especially educational experts, began to suggest that a child's labors might better be spent in the classroom than in the workplace. Compulsory education laws began to pop up at the state level in the 1850s; by 1918, all the states had ratified compulsory education laws and begun running government-funded state schools. At nearly the same time, Reconstruction brought higher education to more Americans than previously

thought possible, and land-grant universities sprang up to serve a newly-intellectualized adult class.

Because of these attempt to shift the efforts of children from physical labor to mental training, by the time President Roosevelt began signing acts for the New Deal the cessation of child labor, usually paired with women's labor, had been under consideration in the United States for nearly a century (Samuel 32). Unfortunately, improving women's labor conditions and regulating children's labor was not always effective. Some work had been done to limit hours in the workplace in the 1860s (33), often on behalf of women who were thought to be less willing to undertake collective bargaining (ibid.). Collective bargaining on behalf of children, on the other hand, was almost nonexistent until the late 19th century, largely due to the high number of rural children needed to work on family farms. Child labor committees were formed at the state level from around 1900 to 1902, when the number of documented employed Americans under the age of 18 was over 1.7 million (Yellowitz 354). In 1904, these efforts coalesced into the National Child Labor Committee. Though they exerted significant pressure through mass political action, lobbying in state legislatures, and Congressional hearings, the NCLC's record was bittersweet. Congressional laws passed in 1916 and 1918 were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court shortly after institution (Yellowitz 355), though some regulations concerning minimum wages for women and children were passed during the same period. Later attempts in 1924 to amend the Constitution to authorize child labor legislation were met with stiff resistance from church groups and farming organizations, leading to a failure to ratify among many states.

The first major victory in the battle to end child labor was a financial reform that seemed superficially unrelated to labor. An integral part of the 1935 Social Security Act was the smaller Aid to Dependent Children Act, which offered government aid to poor single mothers. These funds were intended to keep women with children from needing to enter the workplace, reinforcing a growing belief that the mother's primary role was one of caretaker, rather than breadwinner. This paternalistic approach to support was heightened through the Act's original intended group in need: poor white mothers. Black mothers were barred from applying for or receiving federal aid due to fears that the money would discourage marriage; indeed, the name of the act was amended in 1962 to "Aid to *Families with* Dependent Children" (italics added) in order to highlight that the lack of a father in the household should be a result of death, not an issue of illegitimacy. Though problematic in its execution, the Act functioned as intended on both its economic front, offering a small but meaningful amount to single mothers, and its social front, reinforcing the belief that a woman's primary job was to raise children.

True child labor regulations followed quickly after the institution of the Social Security Act, some decade after the last rounds of attempted child labor legislation. In 1938, as part of the second wave of New Deal programs, the Fair Labor Standards Act implemented a minimum wage and maximum employment hours as well as hard and fast rules prohibiting child labor: children under 16 could not work during school hours, and children under 18 could not work hazardous jobs. Affecting some 700,000 child employees alone, collectively the 1938 Fair Labor Standards act improved the wages of some 300,000 working individuals while reducing the hours of an additional 1.7 million (Clemens 109). Roosevelt praised the program, saying that "next to the Social Security

Act, it is the most important Act that has been passed in the last two to three years" (Samuel 31). Taken together, these two acts dramatically altered the way adolescent subjects figured into the larger national conversation about work, labor, and the nation's emergence from the depths of the Depression.

Through these two acts of Roosevelt's New Deal program, adolescence was segregated from adulthood on the basis of gainful employment: adolescent work was seen as primarily supplementary, and most of the regulations concerning laborers between 16 and 18 were provisions for farming communities to allow teens to work before and after school and during the summer. However, the rationale behind many of the acts reflected a larger cultural desire to segregate late childhood/adolescence from the earlier years of childhood. The advent of serious attempts to curb child labor, particularly for children under the age of fifteen, followed the ratification of compulsory education laws by all states in 1918, when Mississippi finally instituted its own law. These efforts, in turn, shifted to keeping younger children in school for longer. This so-called high school movement dramatically increased the number of high schools (grades 9 through 12 in most places) in the United States, while boosting attendance rates from 15- to 18-year old students from around 15% in 1910 to 73% in 1940 (Goldin 195). By the same token, graduation rates skyrocketed from around 9% in 1910 to over 50% in 1940 for the same age group (ibid.). Indeed, many of the high schools were built through the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, a concerted effort to improve upon the nation's public works. The high school movement worked well to bring in more students up to age sixteen, but as graduation rates in 1940 show, initially older children remained tied to the workforce. Most states required children to attend public school only until the age of

sixteen, though some mandated a grade (usually 10th) and others held onto students until seventeen or eighteen. Nevertheless, even as school hours increased between 1910 and 1940, students, especially rural students and students of color, only stayed in school as long as was mandated by the government. As Claudia Goldin has argued, the strongest proponents of extended schooling for teen children were affluent, white middle-class Americans, especially those in the midwest (42).[8]

Other New Deal acts made clear that the focus of many of the child protections afforded by the Aid to Dependent Children Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act were set aside for younger children. The Civilian Conservation Corps, instituted in 1933, was originally meant to offer jobs to men between eighteen and twenty-eight, but was refocused in 1937 to cater to men between seventeen and twenty-three who were not otherwise employed or enrolled in school. The CCC focused on large-scale public works and improvement projects, such as parks, interpretive areas, and erosion management, adding new job sectors rather than competing with existing ones already hurt by the Depression. Its cousin organization, the National Youth Administration, was instituted in 1935 with a slightly different focus: to keep students of sixteen years old and older in school, developing skills and talents. By the same token, however, the works these students did in part-time work-study programs and other related positions were supplementary to areas that had been hit hardest by economic desolation. In this way, both organizations, although meaningful attempts to protect the interests of the nation's teen and young adult citizens, nevertheless positioned them as outside the existing labor force, as a supplementary labor unit. It is not coincidental that both of these programs

[8] This demographic note will be of considerable importance later, in the discussion of *The Outsiders*.

shuttered in 1942 as wartime manufacturing jobs became abundant. Thus, much of the effort in reconfiguring the child's place in the educational fabric of the US focused on the younger child, staying with them only until the middle of the adolescent, or teen-age, years before opening the door for part-time employment in tandem with education or a career in a field crafted explicitly for their benefit and to prevent competition with other working-age Americans.

Further within this context, the older but not adolescent child, between the ages of seven and twelve, was the most important in the eyes of educators during the 1920s and 1930s, in part because that age seemed the most malleable and precariously positioned. As I discussed the previous chapter, work by psychologist Leta S. Hollingworth and cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead demonstrated the importance of familial, cultural, and social ritual to the development of the individual's sense of belonging. Hollingworth's and Mead's work, among others, focused especially on coming of age, or the onset of puberty, as the time when children began to adapt most swiftly to cultural and social expectations for behavior. In the nascent field of developmental psychology, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget suggested that children learn in distinct cognitive epochs, or phases, which are derived from biological development. Piaget's insights would, in turn, yield changes to education that included the age-grading system of measuring a child's place in school and their individual achievement. For Piaget, the beginning of adolescence (around age 11) was the beginning of abstract thought and metacognition, two cognitive abilities strongly correlated with social cognition. Soon after, Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky contended that children learned largely through adult guidance on tasks they had yet to master. Put another way, Vygotsky argued that

children's development was a function of social interaction and feedback. Finally, in the new field of social psychology, Kurt Lewin suggested that behavior is a function of a person's reaction to their environment.[9]

Taken together, these experts fundamentally altered the development of education in the United States. Together, their insights yield a primary, common assumption: that children learn best by exposure to the environments they will eventually inhabit as adults. The developmental trajectories of young adolescents, between twelve and fifteen, was suddenly of the utmost importance for the survival of the nation. Without guidance, the experts seemed to agree, children would stagnate socially and cognitively; therefore, keeping children in school as long as possible through these growing years was seen as crucial to guaranteeing their full development as eventually productive adult subjects. At the same time, teen students were encouraged to undertake part-time employment as a form of apprenticeship in the working atmosphere of the US labor market, if not in later careers. Ultimately, the gestures were divisive: many experts suspected that most children would simply follow their parents' lines of work, not knowing about other opportunities, a situation that might lead to job stagnation as the number of employable workers outpaced job openings. Teens needed alternative career paths so as not to compete with other generations of laborers.

To address this, many boards of education considered alternatives to the methods that had worked prior to the advent of large, well-attended high schools. Following World War I, large-scale efforts to improve literacy and school attendance culminated in

[9] Lewin means "function of" literally; in *Principles of Topological Psychology*, Lewin expresses the concept as a formula B=f(P,E), where B is behavior, P is person, and E is environment. The deployment of mathematics in psychology as a legitimating measure would be an important examination to undertake in the history of the field.

the adoption of more progressive educational theories in the late 1920s, which focused on a child-centric approach to thinking rather than "inculcating a body of knowledge" (Grieve 27). In the early 1930s, the New York Board of Education revealed that "there were more functional illiterates in New York City than in any one state of the Union except Texas" (Zeitlin 138). The remedy was literature that the children would self-select.

The major barrier to this approach, of course, was that much of the literature available was, for one reason or another, not considered child-friendly or not approved by teachers or boards of education. Because of this, cities like New York banded together with the Works Progress Administration's Project One, a project aimed at funding artists to produce materials for public consumption. Chief amongst the works crafted by WPA writers were state travel guides, extolling the virtues of domestic vacations and thereby keeping American tourism dollars in American pockets even as international travel became more accessible. But as Victoria Grieve notes, some 200 novels were written in the partnership between the city of New York and the WPA under the New Reading Materials Project (1937-1942). NRMP novels, as works created explicitly in partnership between state and federal governments as public materials, not to be sold for commercial gain or compete with other children's books, figured heavily into the development of national identity, citizenship, and individuality for the "urban, second-generation immigrant, elementary age children" for whom they were written (Grieve 30). Like many works published thanks to funding from the WPA, NRMP novels often featured patriotic but radically leftist ideological traits. Julia Mickenberg claims that radical children's books of the 1930s aimed to "educate children so they will be anti-fascists and not

fascists" (89), inculcating child readers with "anti-racist, pro-labor, internationalist Americanism; a celebration of work and workers; and a faith in technology and science as the basis for more equitable distribution of resources, improved health, and diminished social conflict" (90). Grieve aligns NRMP novels with Mickenberg's larger group of leftist children's books:

> The NRMP books consistently suggest politically progressive themes and subjects, the most prevalent of which are the heroic status of the common man; work, workers, and poverty; peace or pacifism; ethnic diversity; and the imaginative restructuring of society along more economically equitable lines. (31)

That these works were written predominantly for elementary-aged children to middle-school children (roughly seven to twelve) is important, especially when considered alongside the New Deal protections for children of this age. By offering children these works as material for later self-selection, the NRMP and WPA normalize pro-labor action, economic redistribution, and ethnic diversity while also glorifying those particularly American values of hard work and persistence. The "heroic status of the common man" is a refrain that guided American exceptionalism early and often. Yet more importantly, early exposure to different environments and experiences was meant to persuade children to begin thinking of new possibilities for their own adult lives, especially as they reached the critical age of adolescence.

However progressive the NRMP books may have been as a whole, the equitable treatment among ethnicities and classes featured in these books was not necessarily extended across the sexes. As Grieve notes several times, in NRMP novels "the

protagonists are almost exclusively boys" (31). "Although sisters sometimes tag along," Grieve writes, "boys are encouraged to explore, to build, and to learn employable skills like journalism, train engineering, police or detective work, or seamanship" (39). That is to say, as Grieve does so well, that in NRMP books, "in general, mothers stay at home; dads go to work" (39). The devaluation of women's domestic labor here mirrors the larger devaluation of domestic efforts in the United States, but it also offers a striking counterpoint, as Grieve alludes, to the wildly popular group of Newbery Medal-winning novels published in the 1930s that feature prominent tomboyish girls. Few NRMP books carry the cultural cachet of those novels (which today carry less than they once did), but nevertheless the difference in value of women's labor between NRMP books (which render women's labor not valuable) and the award-winning popular books (which render it as invaluable) is especially meaningful. Such an examination will also allow for a glimpse of how early assumptions about adolescent behavior, particularly girls' behavior, was articulated prior to the arrival of mass teen culture in the 1940s.

## 2.2. TOMBOYS AS INTERLOCUTORS WITH THE PAST

Children's literature during the 1930s championed the cause of the common man (and, increasingly, woman). Unlike adult fiction and film, which, according to Jennifer Haycock, tended to bifurcate into "the glittering luxury of 1930s Hollywood and screwball comedies or the gritty penury of proletariat literature and documentary photography" (143), children's literature tended to maintain a clear message of the value of hard work and communal collaboration. This may have been because much of the literature written during this time period for children was, as Grieve reminds us, the work

of government-funded writers, many of whom were socialists or at least left-leaning. Moreover, children's literature was produced from a base of largely first- and second-generation immigrant authors and illustrators,[10] and thereby colored by the experiences of immigrant Americans who had known first-hand the difficulties of working to build a positive reputation in the States. For these authors, lessons about the benefits of hard work and perseverance could be found in the nostalgic past--that is, the past that seemed, in the desperation of the Depression, to have rewarded their efforts rather than punished them.

Renewed cultural interest in the value of physical labor for both genders emerged as what Christian McEwen and Elizabeth Segel have both identified as a "golden era" of literary tomboyism (McEwen 6; Segel 47). Between 1934 and 1939, four of the six books selected by the Newbery Medal committee as the best children's book in the United States prominently featured a tomboy character (1934, 1936, 1937, and 1939). Even in the 21st century, this sort of trend has yet to be replicated. Yet more intriguing than the surge of tomboys is how their stories are told: all but one of them are retrospective, occurring prior to the Depression, and they won awards in temporal order: *Invincible Louisa* follows Louisa May Alcott's life from the 1830s to the 1860s, *Caddie Woodlawn* takes place in the mid-to-late 1860s, *Roller Skates* occurs at the turn of the century, and *Thimble Summer*, published in 1939, returns readers to earlier years of the Depression. This is to say nothing of the now-more-recognized group of tomboy narratives set in the 19th century, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series (1932-1943), which are set during the 1870s and 1880s and greatly developed the frontier-girl as icon of American

[10] This is especially true of graphic literature, like picture books and comic books.

self-sufficiency and drive. As a group, these books form a kind of historical overview of tomboys leading up to and during the Great Depression, highlighting, each in their own way, how the labors of girls have ensured American survival for nearly a century.

Michelle Ann Abate notes that thanks to such nostalgic reflection, children's literature stumbled back upon the beloved "Antebellum Hoydens" like Jo March (Abate xiii). Certainly, the publication of *Invincible Louisa* caused heightened sales for Alcott's *Little Women* series and led to a new illustrated edition by Saalfield.[11] For radicalists, Jo was the prototypical symbol of "gender iconoclasm" (Abate 26), borne out of a unique era in American history in which gender-bending tomboyism was at once socially justified and patriotically obliged (Abate 26). For less radical authors, the March family was an example of the benefits of a solid family unit, laboring in tandem for the greater good of themselves and their communities. However, Abate notes, returns to a nostalgic past when women and men labored in equal difficulty for hard-won benefits still did not relax gender codes regarding physicality, class differences, and racial prejudice (26). As Grieve notes, few works in the larger tradition of children's literature during this time deign to "dabble in reality" (39), choosing instead to hide poverty, racial inequalities, class differences, and regional exclusivity beyond the view of the protagonist and readers who tag along with her.

Despite widespread hardship regardless of class, children's literature of the 1930s nevertheless did reproduce many classist divisions. Books for working-class children, Grieve explains, avoid the realities of hunger while depicting in great detail "poverty,

[11] Alcott was especially popular during this time, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly popular film version of *Little Women* (1933), featuring Katharine Hepburn, Joan Bennett, Frances Dee, and Jean Parker.

unemployment, workplace accidents, and inequality, both racial and economic" (39). In working-class protest novels, like *Caddie Woodlawn* or *Invincible Louisa*, those hit hardest by the loss of employment--primarily lower-class men--are called to see the inequalities spawned by downward-directed class warfare (39).[12] In contrast, middle-class fantasies like *Roller Skates* return to romanticized recollections of hoydenism, depicting equality and opportunity reigning over entire communities. Working-class protagonists lamented difference as a problem exacerbated by poverty; middle-class tomboys went "slumming" to enjoy the company of exotic acquaintances, mainly European immigrants. This was not an attempt to equalize affluent whites with working-class immigrants; rather, these were exotic friends whom the girls could visit, offer charity, and then leave feeling better about themselves. Ultimately, however, neither of these traditions truly addresses the realities of economic and racial inequality. Instead, each tiptoes around the issues through a romantic illusion of communal solidarity. In so doing, tomboy novels especially reinforce Marxist communal economics, though they also may be understood as blind to non-economic factors of inequality, such as regional affiliation, education, and race.

Despite these problems, tomboy novels are an important testing ground for related cultural adaptations in the 1930s: shifting attitudes about the roles children's labor and women's labor would play in the larger economic fabric of the United States. The tomboy certainly embodies the tension between traditional masculine and feminine roles, but it also embodies the problem of work as opposed to labor. Work here is the physical

[12] Racial inequality, often between whites and natives, also transpires in these novels; it almost never involves non-native, non-white Americans, however.

act of production, while labor is the economic act of capitalism which renders that production valuable. Ultimately, tomboys seem to reinforce two distinct but related conclusions about labor. First, children--especially female children--must not labor. Children may assist in work, but not for remuneration; their involvement is voluntary or for personal edification or instruction. And yet, upon reaching adolescence, the expectation changes. It is at this point, these novels suggest, that children are called upon to leave behind their laborless lives and begin accruing the skills, knowledge, dedication, and commitment to duty necessary to productively participate in the economic labor ecosystem. In short, these novels turn to a much older tradition, the apprenticeship narrative, to examine how young people learn trades and become enmeshed in the economics of labor in their respective societies. In the 18th century, the apprenticeship narrative came to the novel through Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795), an important precursor to the *Bildungsroman* tradition that is often conflated with modern young adult literature.

The second conclusion about labor refines the argument set out by the first, specifically by adding gender to the equation. With the specter of a broken marketplace looming, it became clear in the 1930s that people needed to purchase as much as they produced in order to make capitalism function after the urbanization boom. With men populating both production and manufacturing jobs, thereby supplying materials as well as the means to make them into objects, there remained a massive gap in the economy for the other side: consumption. These tomboy revisions of Romanticized American history seem to suggest not only that a woman's work must take place in the household, but that her labor--her contribution to the economy--is largely performed through consumption.

Women are characterized as the consumers in the household. Thus, not only are women limited to productive work in the unpaid realm of the home, but they are also limited to being productive members of the economy only through consumption. Theirs is an essentially negative lot: taking, not giving. The sex of the child fundamentally influences his or her opportunity to work for pay or to pay for work.[13] Boys would be expected to learn a trade or begin laboring in manual labor; women would be expected to partake in unpaid domestic labor and to purchase goods for the home. These presumptions reflect cultural prejudices about women's work in the Depression: the CCC, a production arm tasked with rebuilding the country, was open exclusively to young men. Meanwhile, the NYA drew in mostly women, and trained them especially in support roles like office assistant and nurse, operating under the assumption that they would be married and out of the workforce by the end of their twenties. These pernicious beliefs about gendered labor are the same ones that would be challenged within a decade by the advent of World War II. But in these tomboy novels, most of which focus on girls on the cusp of adolescence and the call to join the domestic sphere, hoydens are expected to relinquish their liberty to do their duty as proper ladies. One of these tomboy novels, *Caddie Woodlawn*, shows a "good" example of a working-class tomboy reforming to take up her role as domestic caretaker in training and is illustrative of changing attitudes about girlhood, adolescence, and emerging beliefs about feminine work and labor.

[13] This is also true in the apprenticeship novel, which is often about a boy. Indeed, the *Bildungsroman* is a significantly male-dominated genre of developmental writing. Novels about the formation of girls tend to be classed as *Entwicklungsromane*, novels of general growth and development, or *Erziehungsromane*, novels about classical education or schooling. Some scholars, like Carol Lazzaro-Weis, contend that the female *Bildungsroman* is not possible because the form itself "reinforce[s] male prejudices about women's writing" (1990: 17), and so any form of the "female *Bildungsroman*" is necessarily created to destabilize concepts of "the relationship between experience, subjectivity, and social structures" that the *Bildungsroman* reinforces.

**The Responsible Child: *Caddie Woodlawn,* New Labor, and New Citizenship**

*Caddie Woodlawn* is a historical novel based on the life of Brink's grandmother, Caroline Woodhouse Watkins, and her time living in the Wisconsin territory near Menominee. Rather than serving primarily as historical text, though, *Caddie Woodlawn* is knowingly styled as an intensely patriotic text. At the end of chapter nine, after a rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," Caddie proclaims that she "love[s] America more than [anyone]" because she is "more American than any of them!" (108). It was clear that Brink intended the child reader to replicate these feelings; as Gary D. Schmidt indicates, Brink explicitly identifies the straight line she draws between pioneer and Depression-era child, claiming in her Newbery acceptance speech that "the blood of those pioneers still flows in the veins of our children" some seventy years later (Schmidt 4). Set in the Romanticized post-Civil-War past, Carol Ryrie Brink's novel unabashedly offers a "heightened vision of [the American pioneer experience, suggesting to families in despair an alternate way of life that was part of their own heritage" (Schmidt 4). Caddie is caught in the middle of polarized worlds: young and old, masculine and feminine, rural and urban. These gestures imbue Caddie's personal quest for self-actualization with national importance, offering her as a symbol of Americanness. Indeed, the book concludes by declaring Caddie "a *pioneer* and an *American*" (275, emphasis added), an explicit unification of a particular kind of American citizen and a particular form of Americanness.[14]

[14] The passage is especially interesting because Caddie turns to face westward, implicitly pointing toward American imperialism and expansionism. One of the major problems with this text is its erasure of American violence to natives, particularly through imperialism and expansion.

But the vision of frontier-era America is not historically accurate, nor is it intended to be. Rather, in many of these texts, virtues for the present day are inscribed upon the past. Alfred Habegger contends that in *Caddie Woodlawn* and other novels like it, democratization of action reinforces traditional American values of the importance of individual resourcefulness as well as more recent concepts like communal support (Habegger 111). As Schmidt argues, these works were meant as obviously didactic stories that would instill important, distinctly "American" virtues in the children who read them (4). Rather than telling the history of the United States through a clear lens, "neo-Alcotian" novels like *Caddie Woodlawn* seek to instill a particular set of principles that are directly aligned with nationalist beliefs prominent at the time when the books were written, here 1935.

Though such novels may glorify democratic action as well as the communities that enable it (Schmidt 5), at the same time they frequently offer skewed versions of democracy and liberty, particularly as it pertains to women and minorities. As Peter Stoneley reminds us, while these "neo-Alcotian" novels often forgo the romanticism and sentimentalism of earlier girls' fiction, they nevertheless reproduce ambivalence over the role of the modern woman. For Stoneley, these novels "suggest a widespread ambivalence, not to say disapproval, of the more flapperish evolutions of the New Woman" (135), even as they "sidestep" the problems of "urban squalor and naturalistic representation" by turning to the frontier (135). But this version of the frontier is significantly more gendered than was likely the case. By and large, work on the frontier was dictated by ability, not sex, and both women and men undertook the difficult tasks of

making a life in the effective wilderness. But in novelized form, gender norms become more pronounced.

Indeed, *Caddie Woodlawn* is example of what Michelle Ann Abate has called "tomboy taming" (12), or a story in which the girl protagonist is weaned of her boyish behaviors in order to take up the mantle of domestic femininity. As Abate notes, such outcomes were typical for fictional tomboys. In part, this is because of the role of the domicile as an organizing feature of feminine life. One of the most visible traditions in American children's literature is the orphan girl story, whereby a wild girl is tamed through the gentle care of a loving home and surrogate parents. For Joe Sutliff Sanders, the prevalence of this genre within children's writing for American audiences reinforces the power of the home in disciplining girls: the domestic sphere reigns as the primary method by which girl children are instructed in their self-identity. That is, while boys are free to explore the world around them, building their selfhood from the wider world, girls are commonly expected to render selfhood from the cramped space of the home. For Sanders, girls are taught that they can only be influential through a careful system of self-abnegation (38), sacrificing their own desires to the greater needs of the home. And though *Caddie Woodlawn* is not an orphan girl story, through its taming of the titular character, the novel nevertheless participates in this larger disciplinary action against empowered feminine subjectivity outside the boundaries of the homestead.

For my purposes in this chapter, we can read the shift here not only in terms of self-actualization--which has been deftly covered by both Abate and Sanders[15]--but also

[15] Though Abate only mentions *Caddie Woodlawn* in passing and Sanders's history does not extend to the 1930s.

in terms of the divisions of labor, which is less examined. Though some critics like Anne Scott MacLeod have briefly touched on the ways in which these novels depict near-ubiquitous poverty in a less "grinding" form, causing "neither bitterness nor severe deprivation" in order to equalize the classes (MacLeod 168), few have discussed the actual labors which are rendered viable for boys but not for girls. Indeed, many critics like Stoneley focus on the "hungry and defensive" attitudes that authors like Wilder have about the distribution of wealth, which for Wilder is unmoored from gender and instead connected to "an underlying impulse to keep wealth in the hands of a deserving few" (Stoneley 140). While these readings have merit, I want to suggest that the disciplining of Caddie Woodlawn reflects the renewed vigor with which American culture attempted to corral female labor within the home, even as educational and social reforms urged young women to develop marketable skills for the workplace beyond the front door. In *Caddie Woodlawn*, these disciplinary events take two forms: punishing Caddie for attempting to partake in what would later be considered "men's work" and rewarding her for recognizing the importance of consumption to feminine labor.

## 2.3. "SHAME TO HER! SHAME!" BREAKING CADDIE'S TOMBOY TALENTS

Throughout the novel, characters openly ask when the Woodlawns will teach Caddie to be a lady. Each of these moments bears conspicuous resemblance to narratives of taming, especially the first: the travelling preachers asks, "when are you going to begin making a young lady out of this *wild Indian*, Mrs. Woodlawn?" (14, emphasis mine). And while Caddie's father encourages free-spiritedness, outdoor exploration, mischief, and personal growth and experimentation, the novel is not so forgiving. Throughout,

scenes of Caddie attempting to take part in the competitive, rugged world dominated by men in the narrative yield disastrous results. More often than not, these results do not physically harm Caddie, but they do cause her shame on a public stage.

The very first of these occurs within the first fifteen pages of the novel. Caddie and her older brother, Tom, and the next oldest brother, Warren, are picking hazelnuts at Tom's behest. Soon, "the boys' pockets were filled" (11) and Tom remembers that "the longer they were gone, the more time his mother would have in which to get angry" (12). Caddie, however, remains out of competitive drive; "it was not often that she got more nuts than Tom. Today she would have more than anybody" (12). But as she races home, tearing the sleeves of her dress and scratching her "dirty" face that is "streaked with perspiration" on twigs and branches, she arrives home "red and disheveled" (12). Throwing open the door, she sees that all the Woodlawns are at table with a guest: the circuit rider who queries about when the Woodlawns will tame this wild child. In despair, Caddie drops the edge of her skirt and the hazelnuts spill and roll into "the farthest corners of the room" (13). Caroline Augusta had been "running wild instead of dipping candles and making samplers" (15).

Here, in full view of the most respected member of their community, she is shamed for her competitive and far-roaming ways. These characteristics are the direct result of male influence. Caddie was sick when the family moved to Wisconsin, and after losing one daughter, Mary, John Woodlawn confides to Harriet that he "would rather see her learn to plow than make samplers, if she can get her health by doing so" (15).[16] After

[16] As Sanders notes, one of the key themes that unifies the sentimental orphan girl story is the power of nature to heal physical maladies. Scenes of physical renewal thanks to a more strenuous lifestyle are especially common in American literature, such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911).

seven years of woodcraft, Caddie is no longer frail and pallid. But, at eleven, Harriet feels the time has come for Caddie to begin learning the feminine arts like her sisters, Clara and Hetty. The rest of the novel depicts this transition in Caddie's life by repeating the formula set forth by this introductory scene: Caddie shows a boyish trait, fails, is shamed, and then is tasked with reflecting on how it bears on her future as a lady.

These scenes punctuate the seasons of the novel, slowly paring away Caddie's tomboyish traits. In early autumn, Uncle Edmund comes to hunt pigeons and takes Caddie with him, as she is the best guide. However, when she boasts that she can paddle the river faster than him, he loosens the raft so it splits apart during the journey home, dunking her in the river (43). This lesson about boasting humiliates her. As if that is not enough, Edmund persuades her parents to let him take their dog, Nero, Caddie's closest confidant in the woods, away with him to hunt (51). Without Nero's friendship, Caddie must socialize with other kids, many of whom do not roam the woods like she does. Here again, she is tacitly instructed that her way of life is not correct, and that her sphere is not outdoors. Girls like Caddie belong in the home and the market. In winter, Caddie takes a bet that she will not skate out farther onto a partially-frozen pond than her brothers (73). Again she is dunked, but this time she takes severely ill (74). To this, Caddie's mother proclaims, "you'll be the death of me if not yourself" if Caddie does not start to behave like a lady (74). During this illness, Caddie's father teaches her to mend clocks, his trade beyond homesteading.

This moment marks a turning point in Caddie's disciplining, in which her shame becomes a teaching tool rather than an outright punishment. After the immensely patriotic scene in which Caddie celebrates her birthday (coinciding, of course, with

George Washington's) by holding the flag and singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" with her classmates (107-8), Caddie's mother reinforces that it is "time for her to be a lady" (109). Juxtaposing these two scenes with one another effectively ascribes patriotism onto Caddie's development into a lady; it is her duty not only as a woman, but as a citizen as well. Rather than competing with boys, making bets, getting into fights, and living strenuously, if Harriet Woodlawn had her druthers, Caroline Augusta would be able to "make bread and jelly and six kinds of cakes, including plum" and have compiled an impressive collection of samplers "which anyone may see if they care to look in [her] marriage chest" (110). John Woodlawn insists that Caddie have "a little more time," in which to see her own way soon (110). From this moment, once-comical scenes of a tomboy discovering that she is out of place become moments of maturation and growth for Caddie.

The first of these teaches Caddie that, despite her great spirit, conventions are difficult to break. In spring, rumors of massacre spread amongst the white settlers, prompting everyone farther west to seek shelter with the Woodlawns (117). Overhearing a plot to preemptively attack the friendly local native tribe to dissuade future attacks, Caddie rides out alone to warn them (129). Though she is well-received and her message is in time, after she is escorted home by the leader of the tribe (138), she is rebuffed for riding out on her own. Here, she is not punished; rather, she is shown that peace is negotiated by men and not women or girls. The scene is remarkably stoic and overtly masculine:

> Over her head the white man and the red man clasped hands.

> "I keep the peace, John," said Father. "The white men shall be your brothers."
>
> "Red Beard has spoken. John's people keep the peace."
>
> For a moment they stood silent, their hands clasped in the clasp of friendship, their heads held high like two proud chieftains. (141-2)

For a time, it appears that Caddie has learned the lesson: that men are the ones with the power to make peace and to break it as well. But after a few months of good domestic practices (which we shall examine in a moment), the need to "tame" Caddie comes to a head.

Near the end of the novel, Caddie's cousin Annabelle Grey comes to visit from Boston. Annabelle is the model of polite feminine domesticity and urbane fashion; like Harriet Woodlawn, Caddie's mother, Annabelle has attended finishing school and enjoyed a life of comfort in the city. But because she routinely turns up her nose at the "quaint and rustic" world her cousins inhabit, Annabelle marks herself as an outsider. The trio of troublemakers, oldest brother Tom, youngest brother Warren, and Caddie, take this as evidence that Annabelle needs a few tricks played on her in order to bring her down a peg. But when Caddie is caught putting an egg down Annabelle's dress while the four turn somersaults in the hayloft, her mother finally intervenes. Mrs. Woodlawn sends Caddie to bed without supper, explaining to her brother

> No, Tom. I cannot blame *you* so much. But that a *daughter* of mine should so far forget herself in her hospitality to a guest--that she should be such a hoyden as to neglect her proper duties as a lady! Shame to her! Shame! No

> punishment that I can invent would be sufficient for her. (240, emphasis in original)

Angry and hurt, Caddie thrashes about in her bed before deciding to gather her few belongings, take the mongrel dog that Indian John has left her, and run away into the woods. But before she can leave, her father comes upstairs and tearfully apologizes to Caddie because he is "sort of responsible" for her actions (245). The entire monologue is worthy of consideration:

> Perhaps mother was a little hasty today, Caddie. [...] She really loves you very much, and, you see, she expects more of you than she would of someone she didn't care about. It's a strange thing, but somehow *we expect more of girls than of boys. It is the sisters and wives and mothers,* you know, Caddie, *who keep the world sweet and beautiful*. What a rough world it would be if there were only *men and boys* in it, *doing things in their rough way*! *A woman's task is to teach them gentleness and courtesy and love and kindness*. It's a big task, too, Caddie--harder than cutting trees or building mills or damming rivers. It takes nerve and courage and patience, but *good women* have those things. They have them just as much as men who build bridges and carve roads through the wilderness. *A woman's work is something fine and noble to grow up to,* and *it is just as important as a man's*. But no man could ever do it so well. I don't want you to be the silly, affected person with fine clothes and manners whom folks sometimes call a lady. No, that is not what I want for you, my little girl. I want you to be a woman with a *wise and understanding heart,*

> *healthy in body and honest in mind*. Do you think you would like to grow up into that woman now? How about it, Caddie? *Have we run with the colts long enough?*(244-5)

John Woodlawn's speech is remarkable for the ways in which it reinforces discipline even as admitting to personal weakness. It is *father*'s fault that Caddie is a tomboy; he has failed to discipline her as a girl, resorting to the only form he knows, the disciplining of boys. This moment is puzzling at first glance, but it is incredibly important when understood in the context of sentimental fiction. As Joe Sutliff Sanders reminds us, "children were not only objects of discipline; they were also, of all things, its agents" (4). In sentimental novels, then, the question of how to discipline girls is a mirrored one. On the one hand, the question is taken at face value: "what is to be done with girls?" (Sanders 6) is a question that, when posited by a father at the moment of failure, reflects the complex role that gender plays in disciplinary practices for girls. These practices come into greater relief when cast against the question of civic duty, when the consequences of a poor upbringing are not merely personal or familial strife, but national failure. Shaming Caddie for acting like a boy is a relatively benign way of obviating greater consequences (such as the illness that comes from falling through the ice in the middle of winter), but it comes with its own consequences that remain unexplored in the disciplining of the Woodlawns' male children. For example, there is no concern about Tom or Warren's future masculinity; Caddie's future femininity, however, is imperiled by her lack of discipline. Shaming her for her impropriety causes the outburst that leads her down the mental road to running away to live with the natives. As she muses during

this process, “she knew that they would take her in, and then she would never have to grow into that hateful thing which Mother was always talking about--a lady” (242).

But, as Sanders reminds us, because the question is asked by a father whose gendered knowledge of discipline has failed, it also reveals important features of masculinity as well. As much as we ask “what is to be done with daughters,” we must also ask “what is to be done with fathers?” (Sanders 6). Implicit in this question is the acknowledgment of the limits of patriarchal male privilege to produce results. In a way, *Caddie* disciplines John Woodlawn, not the other way around. As much as his exposition is the disciplinary act needed to bring Caddie around to becoming a woman--in the morning she wakes up knowing “that she need not be afraid of growing up” (246) to become a lady--it is also an explicit acknowledgement that fathers cannot properly discipline daughters using the typical tools of masculinity. In contrast to the “fine and noble” tasks of womanhood, men’s tasks are characterized here as rough and uncouth. In *Caddie Woodlawn*, as in the many sentimental novels of the 1850s and 1860s that it emulates, disciplinary practices mimic this ideological divide between male- and female-dominated sectors of society.

Interestingly, what seems to have gone unexamined in Brink’s retelling of the sentimentality of the 1860s is that these novels complicated what we now call “separate spheres” ideology as much as they reinforced some of its conventions. As Margaret Marsh explains, the ideology of domesticity operated upon the isolation of women from other areas of society. But in the realm of their isolation, the home, “women held sway” as compensation “for their voluntary abdication of the right to a position in the world of men” (167). More importantly for my purposes in this chapter, Marsh notes that “the

doctrine of separate spheres began to break down after the Civil War" during the Progressive Era (167-8). More correctly, renewed gendering of domestic work as inherently feminine did not take place until the early twentieth century, as a result of increased masculine presence in what had until then been understood as the solely feminine domestic sphere. At that point, Steve Cohan writes, "middle-class masculinity began to be governed by a sexual ideology that interpreted the gendered attributes of men as either normal or deviant expressions of their sexuality," including the proliferation of beliefs that male genderedness was "active, insistent, quickly aroused, and genitally focused" (vix). Because *Caddie Woodlawn* is a children's book, we of course do not see sex or genitalia depicted in the novel; however, the other characteristics of masculine gendering, activeness, insistency, and quick arousal (especially of anger) are repeatedly highlighted as the very features that Caddie must remove from herself. These anachronistic characterizations of masculinity point to the novel's ultimate goal of reinforcing *present* assumptions about gender and labor, as do other anachronisms in the novel.

## 2.4. "AND YET SHE'D HAD HER DOLLAR'S WORTH": CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION AND FEMALE POWER

Though *Caddie Woodlawn* is a historical novel based on the life of a real person, Brink fleetingly admits in her later (1973) foreword that "the facts of the book are mainly true but have sometimes been slightly changed to make them better fit the story" (iv). While the facts may be "mainly true," the ideological underpinnings that tie these facts to the lessons they demonstrate are as far removed from 1865 America as Brink herself is.

More accurately, many of the teachings the novel seeks to instill upon its readers are products of Brink's own upbringing. Born in 1895, Brink grew up and came of age during the Progressive Era, and was an adult when the stock market crashed on Black Tuesday. That different upbringing--and the different concerns for raising children inherent in the time periods--stand out in *Caddie Woodlawn* most obviously when one examines the text's suggestions about economic power and women's labor. Anachronistic features in the text include small issues, such as Caddie's singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in chapter nine, which was not made the national anthem until 1931, but more importantly they are revealed by larger errors in the text. These errors are point to a major economic difference between Civil War America and Depression-era America: the role that consumerism, and most important conspicuous consumption, would play in the US economy.

The first major issue with Brink's depiction of the Civil War north is in its basic economic disposition. In chapter five, Harriet Woodlawn heads to town to sell the lot of her prized turkeys, which she suspects will fetch a handsome price. Tom muses that "Mother will make a lot on her turkeys in market this year" (54). Caddie, reminded of her father's words on the subject, notes that "folks are too poor this year on account of the war to pay much for Thanksgiving turkeys" (54). By all counts, this is frankly impossible in the North, even in the territories, at the close of the Civil War. Where the war bankrupted the South, it made the North rich, spurring on the Second Industrial Revolution, which saw widespread innovation in manufacturing and infrastructural improvements for the entire country. In part because of the North's industrial capabilities and in part because of government-funded reconstruction efforts, all sectors of working-

class life, from farming to manufacturing, saw major increases after the war. The greatest decades of American economic growth took place in the latter twenty years of the Second Industrial Revolution. The explosive growth of this time would eventually be recognized as one of the many likely contributing factors to the inevitable economic decline that followed as the US ran out of space in which to expand and construct. These same factors led eventually to the Depression out of which Brink writes her text.

This passage is also interesting because it understands the time of year significantly differently than it would have been by the people of 1865. Traditionally, Thanksgiving was largely a regional holiday celebrated only in New England. It is therefore likely that the Woodlawns, as for Bostonians, would celebrate the holiday (and given John's complete abdication of anything British, especially likely that he would have taken to it wholeheartedly). Though Thanksgiving would be recognized as a federal holiday in 1863, this was not thanks to widespread adoption but rather because of the efforts of a handful of people. The one who stands out most is Sara Josepha Hale, who undertook a seventeen-year campaign from 1846 to 1863 to convince successive presidents of the importance of the holiday. With Abraham Lincoln she finally succeeded. Lincoln, reimagining the holiday as a religious one, called upon all Americans to be unified in Thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November. But in this address, Lincoln himself calls attention not to the need for communities to give generously to those less fortunate, but rather to celebrate the abundance which they have enjoyed:

> Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the

> mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom. ("Proclamation of Thanksgiving," 3 October 1863)

Americans would not widely celebrate Thanksgiving until later in the nineteenth century, and regional variations on the holiday persisted until well into the twentieth century. But Lincoln's suggestion in the speech that Thanksgiving is a time for communal celebration of survival and plenty is especially important because of the results of Harriet's trip:

> "They are nothing but robbers there in town!" she cried. "They wouldn't give me enough for my beautiful birds to pay for rearing them. They said there was no market for them. No market for *my* birds! Ah, if I had these fine, plump fowls in Boston! Wouldn't I make a fortune?" (57)

Harriet's outburst is strange because of its anachronistic qualities. As I noted above, Thanksgiving only became an official holiday with an organized culinary tradition *after* Lincoln's proclamation in 1863. The turkey's role in the feast was contested well into the end of the 19th century. The first ceremonial pardoning of the turkey did not take place until two years later, when Tad Lincoln begged his father to pardon a live fowl brought to the feast and spare him. And though colonist William Bradford's journals, reprinted in 1856 as part of the coordinated effort to normalize Thanksgiving traditions, do mention turkey, they most certainly mean wild turkeys. We mustn't forget, as Rachel B.

Herrmann writes, that Bradford's accounts were not unbiased; rather, they were intended to alleviate potential colonists' fears about coming to the New World (1). Even after Thanksgiving had been codified as a holiday, it was still frequently seen by Southern states as class warfare against the now-impoverished South. Herrmann explains that "for the most part the southern states waited until the end of Reconstruction [in 1877] to celebrate Thanksgiving" (4). Though domesticated turkeys were produced, primarily in the northeast, they were nearly always reserved for upper-class purchasers.[17]

Harriet's outburst is also strange given the otherwise docile sense of charity the Woodlawn family exhibits to their neighbors. Frontier economies did often run on money, but because of fluctuations based on remonetization by both the Confederacy and the Union (the "greenbacks" that Brink notes are nearly worthless in comparison to silver, 40) they also ran, especially internally, on bartered exchanges of labor and goods. Exchange of goods and services, rather than money, is noted frequently in the novel, making Harriet's concern even more curious. On the frontier especially, artisanship still a prominent feature of life, evidenced in the novel by John Woodlawn's attic-wide backlog of clocks to be fixed for neighbors. Because there was little commercial interaction between settlements, it is hard to imagine that Harriet Woodlawn could not barter for something of equal value with at least one person in town. This is especially curious when juxtaposed with Tom, Caddie, and Warren's exhibition of Indian John's scalp-belt, for which they accept entrance fees including "a tidy collection of marbles, old bird's nests, butternuts, pins with colored heads, slingshot crotches, and various other objects of

[17] For example, in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), the Cratchits sit down to a much more affordable meal, goose, before Scrooge treats them to a turkey (156). Dickens's novel is much more emblematic of the time.

interest or art" (172). The children's "entrepreneurship" here more accurately reflects how goods and services flowed in the territories.

Mrs. Woodlawn's outburst about the impoverishment of her community does not reflect prevailing 19th-century frontier attitudes; rather, it suggests twentieth-century evaluations of personal and economic power. Where in the nineteenth century a community would more likely have brought according to ability and shared broadly, *Caddie Woodlawn*'s version of Thanksgiving identifies consumption: Mrs. Woodlawn wants to "make a fortune" on her birds, but cannot for there is "no market" for them in the "barbarous country" where she now lives. In this way, the novel's deployment of Thanksgiving as the unification of American identity and purchasing power is an anachronistic insertion of holiday's shift from celebration of American identity to marketplace holiday. Since its inception into the list of federal holidays in 1863, many Americans recognized Thanksgiving as the beginning of the Christmas season. But in the early 1920s, department stores like Gimbels (1920), Macy's (1924), and Hudson's (1924) began using Thanksgiving as a marketing holiday, sponsoring massive parades in order to encourage shoppers to visit in the weeks before Christmas. In 1939's five-Thursday November, President Roosevelt pushed Thanksgiving back to the penultimate Thursday. Spurred on by Macy's founder Fred Lazarus, Jr., Roosevelt wanted to give stores an additional week in which to shore up their sales for the holiday season. Though he would later relent, returning Thanksgiving to the last Thursday of November in 1942, the act set in motion a new trend of ramping up advertising after Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, therefore, quickly became tied to conspicuous consumption of not only food items but also of consumer goods.

The importance of money takes on an especially meaningful turn when Harriet finishes her screed against the people of Dunnville. She cries: "But out in this barbarous country all folks want to eat is salt pork. *Poor trash! Poor trash!"* (57, emphasis mine). Salt pork, like pigeon pie (which is mentioned in the third chapter of the novel as Caddie ruminates on the coming extinction of the creature) would have been feasible options for Thanksgiving meals, especially on the frontier where much of what would have been eaten for the holiday, like the cranberries and hazelnuts that the children pick wild, would have been whatever the settlers could spare in celebration. Though, as Anne Scott McLeod contends, we do not see "severe deprivation" in *Caddie Woodlawn*'s depiction of poverty, here we see an intense bitterness for the impoverished and an anachronistic recharacterization of hardy foodstuffs common to the frontier as the sole food of the poor. Moreover, Harriet Woodlawn's moniker of "poor trash" for these people who cannot (or will not) purchase her turkeys extends beyond mere economic standing to define their social standing as well. The most conspicuously poor folk are the "half-breed" Hankinson children. In part because he is ashamed of his Indian wife, Harriet remarks that Sam Hankinson "hasn't a very strong character" (158). But we can also read the lack of character as his impoverishment as well, particularly in response to Harriet's disgust with the poor who do not buy her turkeys. The association is made clearer before this moment as well, when the children, growing sick of turkey all winter, begin bartering it away for the Hankerson's parched corn, jerked venison, and salt-pork. Tom notes that "undoubtedly the Hankinsons were the poor children Mother meant, who would be glad of a nice turkey sandwich" (106). Notably, this is not charity; rather, it becomes a business arrangement of mutual benefit to all parties (107).

That this scene immediately precedes Caddie's effluence of patriotism suggests that the children, not the parents, are the ones thinking more correctly of how the economy should work. The form of this economic trade initially looks somewhat Marxist: from each according to ability and to each according to need. When Caddie eventually spends the silver dollar she earns for her bet with Uncle Edmund, she spends it on the Hankinsons, who cannot purchase on their own. But upon closer inspection, it is clear that the form of economic activity is not communistic, purchasing food and clothing, but rather *consumerist*. It is true that the US did have a consumer economy of some scale in the 1860s, largely driven by industrialization. But the kind of *conspicuous consumption*, the highly-visible act of demonstrating social capital by spending economic capital described by Thorstein Veblen in 1899, is directly tied to turn of the century.

In *Caddie Woodlawn*, the act of spending here is *not* an act of providing for the means to survive; it is conspicuous consumption. Caddie has saved the silver dollar even through Christmas, and throughout the novel she is noted as the thrifty one of the children. But ultimately she is not significantly different than her brothers and sisters. She prompts Gussie to collect his brothers Pete and Sammie and come with her to Dunnville to spend "this whole silver dollar" (158). Once they arrive at the Dunnville store, the proprietor, Mr. Adams, notices that "Caddie Woodlawn, *with the air of a queen*, ushered in the three little half-breeds and laid a silver dollar on the counter" (160). Having the money alone provides Caddie with a royal air; the flourish of laying it upon the counter makes all the more obvious her intent. But, in case Mr. Adams, who "was accustomed to visitors after school [coming] in with a penny or two, or sometimes only wishful looks" (160) does not yet understand, Caddie makes it exceptionally clear. "'I want to spend it

all, Mr. Adams,' she said, 'so *you'll have to tell me when I've used it up*'" (160). Remembering that, by Brink's own admission, a silver dollar is triple what a paper dollar would be, Caddie has laid something like three hundred times the normal amount of money Mr. Adams would expect on the counter, and has also informed him that it must all be used. But because it is such a large sum, she reminds him, he will need to keep track for her. Money is literally and figuratively no object, in that Caddie does not really understand its value in object exchange and in that there is so much that prices are essentially meaningless.

The things she buys reinforce how conspicuous the consumption is: buckets of various candies, three colorful, high-quality tops, three combs, (so rarely purchased that the box is dusty), thirty cents' worth of red handkerchiefs (162-3). The purchasing power Caddie exercises brings unbridled joy; the three children "capered about and jostled each other and laughed aloud as Caddie had never heard them do before" (164). The joy is not theirs alone. Mr. Adams notes that Caddie has not purchased anything for herself, but she exclaims, "Oh, yes, I did, Mr. Adams!", and the narrator knowingly explains that "she'd had her dollar's worth" (164). Caddie has just learned that money has the power to bring happiness, and that it is a power she can exert whenever and wherever she pleases, provided the capital is there to produce the enjoyment.

It is in this moment that Caddie discovers the power of labor reserved for women in the new economy of consumerism: in purchasing. This feeling had been hinted at earlier in the novel. A bored Caddie, recovering from her illness, looks on an object that seems relatively important, "the Caroline table which really belonged to [Caddie]" and "had been made by one of Mother's ancestors" and passed down among Carolines in the

family (77). Ultimately, though, Caddie thinks that "even a nice little mahogany table which really belongs to you isn't much company and grows tiresome after you have looked at it for a while" (77). Buying new things is exciting. When repairing the old is explicitly tied to the masculine sphere (father's work on the clocks), the power of retention of objects is further separated from Caddie's ability to exert influence. On the other hand, consumption is reinforced as the preferable way for Woodlawn girls to participate in the economy. After the arrival of the Woodlawns' sole means of communication with the outside world, a small river steamer that runs the Menominee, the importance of consumption to femininity is reinforced: Clara, the model of femininity amongst Caddie's sisters, "turned over the pages of *Godey's Lady's Book* and sighed over the costumes" (203-4). Poor Clara Woodlawn; if only her family had stayed in Boston, then she could have been a wealthy socialite!

This is not to say that Brink, through Caddie, suggests wanton purchasing with all available money. Rather, because the novel is written after the astonishing crash of some of America's wealthiest, *Caddie Woodlawn* expresses a distinctly middle-class version of conspicuous consumption. The Woodlawns' nearest living socialite, Annabelle Gray, shows the perils of unchecked consumption. When she shows off her newest dress, she crows about its fashionability: "all the girls in Boston are wearing them now, but none have as many buttons as I have. I have eight and eighty, and that's six more than Bessie Beasely and fourteen more than Mary Adams" (229). Whoever Bessie and Mary are, it is clear from their dress, the outward displays of their wealth, that they occupy a rung on the Boston social ladder somewhere several buttons below Annabelle Grey. However, as the children show her, buttons may mean something in a place where purchasing power

translates into greater social influence, but on the farm buttons are just treats for sheep (235). When transferred to the pragmatic world of the frontier, upper-class consumption is stripped of context and becomes meaningless wastefulness. Conversely, spending money wisely—making the most of money and bringing the best outcomes with it—is valued, as we see when Caddie begins to partake in marketplace exchanges.

Annabelle is not the only model of overt social hierarchy based on purchasing power that *Caddie Woodlawn* excoriates, but she is the most American. In the chapter twenty-two, the Woodlawns receive notice that, should he want his place back, John can reclaim his rightful ownership of the title Lord Woodlawn, as well as the lands and wealth associated with it. Of course, these gifts will only be offered should John give up his American citizenship (255). Annabelle cannot speak highly enough of the opportunity, gushing about being "presented to the Queen," attending "balls and concerts and all manner of elegant things," wearing "the very latest fashions and more buttons than anyone else in London" ("with no sheep to eat them off") and, most importantly, "all the handsome noblemen simply languishing for dances" (257-8). These outward indicators of prestige and power are underpinned, as John explicitly notes, by the powers of wealth. Interestingly, despite statements early in the novel that he could never support the British because they are against abolition[18] (25), it becomes clear that the real motivating factor for John is money.

John's father lost the title of Lord Woodlawn when he took a commoner as a wife. Earning meager pay as a painter while his wife "earned what she could as a seamstress" (94), the elder Woodlawn died when John was just ten, leaving his mother destitute and

[18] This is also mostly incorrect. Slavery was abolished in England in 1833.

at the mercy of the community. But thanks to their help and to John's penchant for dance (94-5), they earned enough money to survive. As John explains to his children, "it was a hard struggle, but what I have in life I earned with my own hands. I have done well, and I have an honest man's honest pride. I want no lands and honors which I have not won by my own good sense and industry" (97). He reinforces this lesson in the penultimate chapter, but with a caveat that has changed from his first unflinching argument that one must work for one's own wealth:

> "An inherited fortune is never quite one's own," sad Father slowly, "and yet I want you to understand that money and power are also great things, and that great good may come of them, if they are wisely handled." (264)

## 2.5. CONCLUSION: BUYING POWER AND A REVITALIZED ECONOMY

Reading *Caddie Woodlawn* as an examination of new labor practices for women in the 1930s allows us to reconsider John Woodlawn's final statement. Indeed, in tandem with the trio's observations about their father, it seems impossible not to read it as a nod to new economic changes:

> "I think that Father likes to be at the front of things," said Caddie. "He likes to be free and help build new places. I think he'd rather go on west than go back to an old country where everything is finished."
>
> "I would too," said Tom. "I'd rather build a new mill in America than live in a castle in England that somebody who'd died hundreds of years ago had had the fun of building. That's how I feel."
>
> "Me, too," said Warren. (265)

Just as the Woodlawns in 1865 must take on the task of rebuilding a devastated, divided country, so too must the children in 1935 rebuild the devastated economy that has been passed down to them. With the contiguous frontier closed and only an enormous swath of land to the north and an island kingdom to the west to be conquered, American writers nevertheless returned to a time when the nation was ripe for expansion and reconstruction. On the one hand, the wide open possibility presented by postbellum America symbolized the many possibilities, as well as the hard choices, that would face citizens as the country recovered from the Depression. These romanticized narratives about the frontier offered iconic depictions of self-reliance and resilience that the country's youngest needed in order to survive economic disaster. In these stories, children could be shown visions of divided Americans coming together again after years apart--another issue that plagued the US during the Depression, caused by a widening gap in the distribution of wealth between the richest and poorest Americans at the end of the so-called "Gilded Age."

In other ways, though, the renewal of separate spheres ideology in texts for children as this time is an important clue as to the ways that the revitalized American economy would reconsider the role of labor and how children should be guided to participate in it. As the efforts of legislators and elected officials nationwide show, governmental aid programs sent two distinct but clear messages to the nation's youth. The first was that children needed to stay in school, get an education, and be better prepared as citizens, while teens needed to prepare to meet the demands of a new, completely different economy that would be more resilient to manufacturing slowdowns and failed speculation. This government-sanctioned separation of childhood, dominated

by schooling, from adolescence, dominated by career preparation for adulthood, reflects changing attitudes about the labor of young people. At the same time, the careers into which adolescent subjects were funneled through federally-funded programs were expansions into the uncharted territories of the growing economy of consumerism.

In addition to differentiating between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, New Deal programs also reinforced once-popular beliefs in separate spheres ideology, particularly in the division of labor. New Deal programs replicated these divisions in suggestive ways: for example, men would be employed in the physical task of rebuilding the country, evidenced by programs like the CCC, while women would be called to keep the men in line, reminding them of kindness and compassion while the country clawed its way out of devastation. These differentiations of labor practices based on gender themselves replicated the differing kinds of childhood preparation that many middle-class white children experienced in scouting programs. In these scouting programs, maleness was associated with assertiveness, handiness, and outdoor skills like orienteering and survival. Girl scouts, on the other hand, associated femininity with communal engagement, salvaging, and caretaking. The same traits that were instilled in Americans between the ages of around eight and sixteen translated into labor practices in the CCC and NYA that divided men and physical labor from women and clerical work.

However, as scholars like Steve Cohan remind us, the renegotiation of labor that placed men into increasingly feminized careers also displaced women from the one place where the sentimental tradition had suggested they retained power: the home. Indeed, materials of the time, as well as the NYA itself, were clear in their messages to women: the only women who work are those who do not marry. Often, spinster women of the

children's novels of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s are teachers or seamstresses, classic models of feminine labor divorced from familial belonging. The message is clear: even unmarried women will, through their tolerable labor, support the family. But as the Progressive Era brought the vote and efforts to enhance female power in the workplace grew in influence, driven in part by the development of strong labor and trade unions, women demonstrated a keen desire to be meaningful participants in the economy, not merely supplemental figures who could stand in when not enough male workers were available. As important as production was, Depression-era economists and lawmakers also understood more than ever before that consumption was just as important to the health of the economy. And so, one of the methods of economic engagement that was posited, especially to young girls, was to exercise power through consumption. The association of pleasure with purchasing led almost inevitably to the association of purchasing with identity. Even when material goods were rationed, purchasing government trust in the form of bonds was the civic duty of all able Americans, especially women who could not otherwise contribute to the war effort.

Selling consumerism as the best approach to ensuring the wellbeing of the nation was not a trend isolated in children's fiction, but rather a much larger concern in American culture. As Kathy M. Newman demonstrates in her book *Radio Active: Advertising and Consumer Activism, 1935-1947* (2004), many highly-publicized works across media platforms and for differing audiences arose to directly address the question of consumerism. However, as books like *Caddie Woodlawn* and others of the period, including Ruth Sawyer's *Roller Skates* (1937), Ruth Brindze's *Johnny Get Your Money's Worth (And Jane Too!)* (1938), demonstrate, consumerism was quickly becoming one of

the most pressing issues for Americans concerned about the wellbeing of their children during and after the Depression. Though they offered differing advice on consumption--*Johnny Get Your Money's Worth (And Jane Too!)* is especially suspicious of advertising consumerism to children--nevertheless the centrality of consumption as a method of creating happiness and meaning reinforces how quickly the American economy was changing to a consumerist model. At the same time, it suggests that the only way out of Depression is for all citizens, children included, to show trust in the economic system by participating in it.

What makes *Caddie Woodlawn* stand out from these other books, especially the other tomboy novels of the time, is that the form of consumerism being modeled is distinctly anachronistic to the time; rather, it is endemic to the 1920s and 1930s. Even *Roller Skates* and *Thumble Summer*, other tomboy novels that champion consumerist ideologies, ultimately present a form of consumerism that existed more or less as depicted in the time in which the novels are set. Combining the tomboy-taming narrative, in which a girl is explicitly instructed in the correct way to perform femininity, with settings that foreground economic changes toward a consumerist model effectively conflates femininity with purchasing. The "correct" performance of female identity, these books all suggest, is to buy, buy, buy.

With renewed manufacturing thanks to the outbreak of the Second World War, questions of production and consumption became the national norm, rather than fringe topics in radical children's literature. Indeed, none of the tomboy novels that appeared in the midst of the Depression could easily be characterized as "progressive," especially because of their ultimate refusal to allow a young girl to upset gender norms. The

American economic landscape would enjoy a booming resurgence that would last for nearly forty years and usher in consumer capitalism. The terms that had been negotiated concerning gender roles in providing for the economy would become solidified during this time. As Cohan reminds us, wartime service would normalized singular, hegemonic conceptions of masculinity and femininity almost immediately following the call to serve. These norms would, as we shall see in the next chapter, redefine masculinity in the United States by the terms of national military service and femininity by supporting that service. With the explosive growth of the commodity culture that arose in the mid-to-late 1940s, femininity would be even more explicitly tied to purchasing than it is in books like *Caddie Woodlawn*. Novels like *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) and the birth of the teen magazine industry (a major target for advertisers) gesture toward the growing concerns of middle-class white women to purchase their identities. But for men, especially working- and middle-class men, masculinity would begin to resemble the external markers of military service: bland, uniform, macho, and unselfishly willing to sacrifice for the good of the country. Where women were called to open their wallets, men were asked to give up their bodies.

# CHAPTER 3. GOSH GEE WHIZ GOLLY! MODEL CITIZENSHIP IN *CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS*

"What would you suggest, gentlemen, a character out of the comic books? Perhaps the HUMAN TORCH in the Army would solve our problem!"
- FDR in *Captain America Comics* #1: "Meet Captain America"

In the last chapter, I traced the ways in which New Deal attitudes about labor and the adolescent subject worked to produce literature that dealt ambivalently with how young Americans, particularly girls, should begin to serve the economic needs of their nation. The ambivalent tone of these conversations changed significantly in 1941, with the entrance of the United States into World War II. The heavy investment of material resources and personnel required by the war effort gave the period an atmosphere of self-sacrifice for the war project. Where there had been aimlessness as a result of changing labor conditions, there was now a concerted effort to produce as much material (and materiel) as would be necessary to win in the East. Not only were there now plentiful working opportunities in fabrication, but the war required a massive investment of able-bodied soldiers and the support staff, including nurses, to keep the military functioning. As a result, many of the New Deals work programs for teens were cut short with the advent of the Second World War, and so too were ruminations about how young Americans could serve the nation. Rather, the answer to what teens needed to do became very clear: prepare themselves to aid in the war effort, whether domestically or abroad, in any way possible. Unlike other wars, World War II in the United States brought with it a major investment of domestic effort beyond simply sending sons to fight the Nazis. Though many Americans of service age felt the call to serve--especially those whose families were actively fleeing the spread of the Nazi regime in Europe--the sheer size of

the war meant that both servicemen and civilians would be called upon to perform "service," whether military or domestic, in order to protect the nation.

Importantly, the insights of the last chapter, which seek to understand how consumption overtook production as the main economic component of self-actualization, provide a crucial avenue to understanding how young Americans were prepared for total-war service. In this chapter, I look to the ways that mass market popular culture, specifically superhero comic books, came to act as one of the primary recruitment drives for young Americans. As a result of these efforts, comic books gained a lasting paradoxical relationship to adolescence, which Michael A. Chaney has summarized well: "comics promote adolescence and its rejection; they encompass both the view of (or as) the child and the child's view under verbal erasure" (59). Put another way, comics teach adolescent subjects both how to become teens and how to leave adolescence behind. Perhaps the best example of this in the rise of young adult fiction is in the longest-lasting nationalist superhero in the American canon, Captain America. In Captain America and his kid-sidekick Bucky Barnes, American readers saw fantasy ideals of American wartime model masculinity on brash and lurid display. And while a main feature was, indeed, the physical prowess that Cap displays on every cover and in every panel, Bucky's contributions to the war must not be understated, as he helped normalize a set of actions that were critical to domestic safety but also paved the way for features of American culture yet to come.

## 3.1. "FROM NOW ON, WE MUST BOTH SHARE THIS SECRET TOGETHER": IMMIGRANT HEROES AND "AUTHENTIC" AMERICANS

As I discussed in the first chapter, comic books in the 1940s were read by a wide swath of the population, including children, teens, and adults. At the time they were enjoying a so-called "Golden Age" in which readership numbers exploded and, subsequently, the number of publishers and creators expanded to fill the gaps. The bulk of the Golden Age (1938-1955), as Joseph Darowski suggests, was dominated by the 1940s and the superhero genre (98). What Douglas Wolk calls "the spandex wall" (89) was in 1940 just one of many genres of comics that would be published in a single volume. By 1950, it would have turned into the "monolithic presence" at the core of American comic book identity (Wolk 89). During the war years, *Captain America Comics* accounted for one-fifteenth of the fifteen million comics Timely (who would become Marvel) sold every month (Wright 36). Even today, in the wake of the graphic novel and the success of independent publishers working in every genre, comics remains synonymous with superheroes to the uninitiated.

Comics were read primarily by children and teens. The cheap cost made it inevitable, and data from the 1940s shows that teens had part-time jobs to support a comics habit (Gordon 142). But having a young audience does not mean that the stories could be trivial or jejune. Consider that, even within the single age demographic of "teen," comics publishers had to account for a wide array of stages of development. At the lowest end were teenagers of twelve or thirteen, who were barely considered more than children and whose tastes were only slightly different. At the highest end, young men of eighteen or nineteen, adults in name only, whose tastes were significantly

different than their juvenile peers'. Add in the young but adult reader, aged twenty to twenty-five, who preferred more complex stories and mysteries or thrillers, and it is easy to see why the single-story, single-character volume popular in the 21st century would never have passed muster in the infancy of comics publishing. With audiences not yet conveniently demarcated and shelved according to advertising corporation surveys, comics publishers had to appeal to a large portion of the population in order to survive on such small profits.

In order to account for the variegated readership, many comics publishers produced volumes with multiple stories designed to capture multiple audiences, a little of something for everyone. They featured detective stories, mysteries, science-fiction thrillers, romances, comic takes on classics like Macbeth, and, indeed, superheroes. It would not have made sense any other way in those early years. Mixed readership was simply the norm for comics. Their low cost, cheap quality, and mass production made them perfect for squirreling away in a schoolyard backpack or barracks footlocker. The varied readership is evidenced, in part, by the variety of advertisements that appear in comics: ads for x-ray goggles competed for space with the ubiquitous "Atlas Body" ads targeting skinny young men and ads to sell off cheap transistor radios. Though children made up the majority of the readers, a good proportion of readers in the 1940s were the same young men who were called upon to defend the nation. Amongst service-age men, comics were incredibly popular; in 1944, the *New York Times* estimated that a full quarter of the magazines read by servicemen were comics (*NYT*, Aug 2. 1942). Ian Gordon reports that in the same year, 41 percent of men between eighteen and thirty read more

than six comic books a month, while the number in training camps was even higher, 44 percent. Even 13 percent read at least one comic book a month (139).

With its dual readership, *Captain America Comics* needed to model ideal American citizenship for boys and for men. Though the man got top billing as Captain America, the boy's influence on culture in the 1940s and 1950s should not be overlooked; Bucky was, during the 40s, just as memorable and recognizable as his superpal Steve. But what indeed was the message sent to young men by comics publishers at this time? For men, *Captain America Comics* introduced an ideal form of masculine service to the nation, one that was hyperphysical, self-assured, and unmoored from ethnic, racial, or economic difference in service to a great form of patriotism. For boys who could not serve, service involved supporting the war effort both fiscally and by protecting the home front from the secret machinations of traitors and spies. Superheroes were just one of the many avenues by which the creators and curators of American culture in the 1940s would get citizens involved in the war effort.

To put it plainly, superheroes during the wartime years (1941-1945) were, more often than not, patriotic symbols of the nations they protected. The message they sent was to be a good citizen. Superheroes evaded much political scrutiny in part because the specter of destruction in World War II was so great, but also because they functioned as essentially position-neutral patriotic icons.[19] Captain America can appeal equally to left and right, Jason Dittmer explains, because he acts as a "rescaling icon," a symbol of Americanness that brings national identity down to the personal scale (404). Captain

[19] They were, of course, not neutral. Rather, characters like Captain America and his patriotic ilk (Captain Canuck in Canada, for example) were imbued with the political beliefs of their creators. Indeed, their very existence and appearance (see, for example, Canada's *Nelvana of the Northern Lights*, an indigenous superhero created in 1941) is often itself a political statement.

America is, for Dittmer, a territorial symbol (405), what geopolitical scholar Anssi Paasi defines as an "abstract expression of group solidarity embodying the actions of political, economic, and cultural institutions in the continual reproduction and legitimation of the system of practice that characterize the territorial unit concerned" (Paasi 245). Such icons are necessary because "a young child cannot aspire to be a flag; he or she cannot be taught how to be an American by a bald eagle" (Dittmer 405). In this way, the identity of "Captain America" becomes emptied of actual meaning beyond what is supplied by the author--in this case, left-wing questioning of the validity of declaring war on an abstract concept, but in the 1940s a stranger amalgamation of national pride and personal deference.

Superheroes were so effective as rescaling icons of national identity--we need only look at the War of 1812's comic production, Uncle Sam, for evidence of it[20]--that they were produced in record numbers throughout the 1940s. Between 1940 and 1947, at least twenty obviously nationalistic superheroes were created and published by mainstream comics presses in the United States and Canada. These ranged in representation from embodiments of flags, like Captain Flag and the Star-Spangled Kid (sidekick: adult supervisor Stripesy), and enactors of national qualities, such as Liberator or Spirit of '76, to personifications of national icons like Fighting Yank and Patriot (colonists) and Vigilante or Tex Thompson (cowboys), and even comics personifications of the nations themselves: Uncle Sam and Johnny Canuck.[21] Few survived beyond the

[20] Not, unfortunately, Will Eisner's reimagination of the character in *National Comics* #1 (July 1940), who was literally the personification of slain American patriotism, and who was often depicted punching foreign combatants in the jaw. *His* juvenile partner, Buddy Smith, manned a variety of artillery in the background.

[21] Spirit of '76 (William Nasland) and the Patriot (Jeff Mace) would become alternate Captain Americas in a retcon of postwar events (*CAC* #215), casting the Captain as an ideal, rather than a person.

war except as cameos in other established canons, such as the Justice League of America's run, with the important exception of Captain America.[22]

In Captain America's comics debut, the fictionalized Franklin Delano Roosevelt addresses concerned military brass at a secret government base, referring to the "problem" of deep-cover spies infiltrating the United States military. He wisecracks to the assembled officers that, perhaps, the solution to their problem lies not in the human, susceptible to influence from the so-called "fifth column" of communist sympathizers and anti-Patriotic types, but in the *superhuman*. The President calls in FBI chief "J. Arthur Grover" (tongue-in-cheek doppelganger for J. Edgar Hoover) to show the men to their experimentation lab, where scrawny art student-turned-super-soldier Steve Rogers (not yet fit for service) is awaiting his injection of top-secret military serum. Rogers receives the drug and, as Lillian S. Robinson puts it, "Captain America is born, gets christened, and proves his mettle right there in the lab" (106). She goes on to note that Roosevelt's question, then, is rhetorical: a comic-book hero is exactly what the US military needed to give it a proverbial (and here, literal)[23] shot in the arm.

The fictional Roosevelt's "problem" here--how to cleanse "an army spotted with spies"--mirrors a "problem" the real Roosevelt faced in 1941: a United States spotted with first- and second-generation immigrants of varying citizenship status, and an increasing number of them coming of military service age. Though Cap was born in

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[22] Interestingly, Germany never had comic books during World War II, as they were outlawed by Nazi anti-smut laws. They did, however, read the anti-German comics coming out of the US during the war. In 1940, responding to a two-page story in *Look* magazine, "How Superman Would Win the War," the SS lamented Jerry Siegel's influence on American children: "He cries 'Strength! Courage! Justice!' to the noble yearnings of American children. Instead of using the chance to encourage really useful virtues, he sows hate, suspicion, evil, laziness, and criminality in their young hearts."

[23] Due to Comics Code Authority restrictions on the depiction of intravenous drug usage, Cap's origin story gravitated in later years away from an injection to an oral serum, a pill, radiation, and other methods.

March 1941, nine months before Pearl Harbor and the official entrance of the United States into World War II, even before war loomed many Americans questioned the loyalty of immigrants, particularly those of Japanese, German, and Italian descent. In response to Pearl Harbor, FDR famously issued presidential proclamations 2525, 2526, and 2527 under the auspices of the Alien Enemies Act, authorizing the government to arrest, detain, and intern non-naturalized Japanese, German, and Italian residents, respectively. In February 1942, Roosevelt passed Executive Order 9066, which gave the government the power to arrest, detain, intern, and deport even naturalized Japanese-American citizens of the first generation and even the second generation--those born in the United States--if they held dual citizenship with Japan.

Captain America, the Fist of Democracy, the symbol of American patriotism made flesh, represents the perfect solution to Roosevelt's double problem: he is the ideal soldier in body and in spirit, able to punch Hitler square in the face while staying wholly dedicated to the United States. Along with the dozens of nationalist superheroes and heroines who followed him,[24] Captain America instructs young American men in the practice of patriotism, preaching the primacy of military service to the nation in its time of need. At the same time, however, Captain America, as a comic-book hero, was held in low regard by many of the self-appointed stewards of adolescent well-being. It is ironic that Captain America creators Jack Kirby and Joe Simon have the fictional Roosevelt address a fictionalized J. Edgar Hoover, one of a handful of public figures who spoke out loudly against comics. Where the real J. Edgar Hoover once reproduced art critic John

[24] Though we cannot be absolutely sure because truly detailed tracking of comic books would not begin until the Overstreet Price Guide was minted in 1970, existing records suggest that some two dozen obviously nationalist superheroes were produced in the US and Canada between 1940 and 1946.

Mason Brown's denunciation of comics as "the marijuana of the nursery; the bane of the bassinet; the horror of the house; the curse of the kids" (Thompson 1), his fictional counterpart J. Arthur Grover is the mastermind behind the plan that produces America's greatest nationalist comics icon. By the same token, Steve Rogers, also known as Captain America, embodies national favor even as he betrays national suspicion: a patriotic white American man who was also a second-generation immigrant. Thus, in a literal and figurative sense, in order to attain his heroic status, Steve Rogers has to erase the less desirable aspects of his legacy: in the literal sense, his immigrant past, and in the figurative sense, his association with the seemingly poisonous medium of comics. In order to be "All-American" in Cap's formulation, one must leave behind one's other identity: the alter-ego composed of one's ethnic, cultural, and personal heritage, the less-respectable assumptions about one's existence.

Captain America's particular figuration of male service to the nation, which erases difference in service of a unified "masculinity," was modeled to and consumed by tens of thousands of adolescent and adult males in the 1940s. In part, this was only made possible because of the homogenizing influence the war exerted on American masculinity. As Steve Cohan explains,

> An ideology celebrating "home" and "nation" motivated patriotism by equating a single normative masculinity with the American character, setting the terms for the working class's identification with middle-class hegemony (and with it, conformity to middle-class beliefs about masculinity) after the war. (xiv)

The muscled, athletic, hypermasculine, patriotic superhero reflected many of the features of idealized American masculinity that flourished during the war. As comics proliferated during the period, ever increasing numbers of teen and early adult boys, between sixteen and twenty-five, were exposed to this particular representation of masculinity as the ideal one to protect and serve national interests. Just as tomboy novels of the 1930s linked romantic ideals of domesticity with girls' labor, superhero comic books of the 1940s connected New Deal work programs for boys to the regimented service of the armed forces. Often, these comics painted the world in Manichean terms not solely based upon racial identity, but more importantly upon absolutist conceptions of national identity: us and them, good and evil. In these comics, teens were led to believe that if they only erased the markers of their difference from unified American identity, they could be embraced for their Americanness. If they bought into a national illusion of unification--one which disallowed racial and cultural difference and political nuance--then they too could become All-American heroes.

Captain America's persistence beyond the cultural moment which spawned his and so many other heroes' defiant patriotism demonstrates the character's deep entrenchment in the American myth of self-making in service of country. J. Richard Stevens explains that, by the series' own admission, Captain America "was created in order to battle the Nazi disruption of the pre-World War II American way of life" (608); Andrew and Virginia Macdonald rightly note that Captain America's tale "was the American success story of myth and Horatio Alger: poor but deserving kid makes good" (249). The fact that, regardless of origin story, Captain America is *always* a volunteer reinforces the autonomous nature of his becoming Captain America: it is a choice. Unlike

Bucky, Steve is not forced (by circumstance) into his role as Captain America, but rather chooses it over his own advancement in the military.

Certainly, Cap's ability to tap into the American myth of self-improvement was an important part of his success, but the nationalizing tone it takes solidified his place in the canon. Steve Rogers begins as a rejected volunteer, deemed unfit for service (*CAC* #1.3.4). As part of his metamorphosis into Captain America, Rogers acknowledges that he must make a personal sacrifice of having his service associated with Steve Rogers in order to serve the nation. He will become a private in the US Army and be given menial tasks in order to keep his service as Captain America secret. Eventually, Steve Rogers will no longer be Captain America; yet it is implied that there must *always* be *a* Captain America. Thus, when Rogers undergoes the experimentation that will remold him into Captain America, it is entirely in service to the nation: any personal gain is rendered nil by the story. As if to reinforce the separation of service from person, despite the hero's moniker, Steve Rogers does not gain military lauding: his role as a private in the US Army, relegated to stable duty or peeling potatoes, cuts a humorous counterpoint to the salutes he receives as Captain America.

By putting on the uniform and subjecting his body to the whims of the US government, Steve Rogers ceases to be Steve Rogers, and in so doing, abjures the individualizing features of his life, such as his race, ethnicity, heritage, sexuality, and class. Truth be told, the man in Captain America's costume seems barely human on the pages of the comics, never seeming to need to eat, sleep, or expose weakness. Though it may seem dark to ask servicemen to efface themselves in service to the nation, many immigrants saw the opportunity as one that allowed them to navigate prejudices that

otherwise would have prevented them from being integrated into the larger fabric of American citizenship. Perhaps the best examples of this phenomenon in relation to *Captain America Comics* are its creators, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. In 1943, Simon volunteered for the Coast Guard, performing military functions on the home front. Meanwhile, Kirby signed up for the Army and was stationed in the Fifth Division, Third Army under General Patton on the European front (Evanier and Sherman, 80).

In addition to shaping the violence that underscored Cap's exploits in *Captain America Comics*, Simon and Kirby's service informed Cap's relationship to the nation in a more peculiar way. Simon and Kirby, like many comics creators in the 1940s, were ethnically Jewish, second-generation immigrants to the United States. For many ethnically non-white Americans (and many ethnically white Americans, such as German Americans and Italian Americans), military service was one of the few ways an immigrant or child of immigrants could effectively serve the nation without drawing suspicion from other American citizens. Unmoored from ethnicity, Chad Barbour argues that the masked Captain America attempts to "establish and perpetuate an authentic white American identity" (269). Even if they weren't considered white, service in the military allowed some ethnic groups, including Jewish Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, Pacific Island and Asian Americans, Indigenous Americans, Mediterranean Americans and even some demonized European Americans to temporarily suspend their "nonwhiteness" through the mask of the uniform.

On the surface, then, *Captain America Comics* seems to promise to immigrant readers that they will be reborn through their service, offered a pathway to true citizenship that merely acting like a good citizen could never afford. Barbour explains

that through their service "these white males obtain a physical superiority that solidifies their manhood and anchors them to national service" (279). Captain America—and by extension all wartime servicemen—is connected to the protection of the nation through physical prowess.[25] Interestingly, the intrinsic masculinity that Rogers gains by becoming Captain America does not translate to his life outside of that role. Even with his super-strength, super-intellect, and super-body, Rogers strikes out frequently with women. The exception, of course, is Elizabeth "Betty" Ross, an FBI investigator whose name bears too much similarity to the apocryphal creator of the American flag, Betsy Ross.[26] In keeping his identity a secret, he does not profit from being Captain America beyond personal satisfaction from serving the country. This altruistic desire to put one's country before oneself is perhaps the core virtue that Captain America tries to instill in his older readers. When Captain America submits to the uniform, he, like many other service-age men in 1941, gives up some of his identity in exchange for the charge of guarding the nation. And yet, these sacrifices are rendered valuable not because they receive military award for services rendered, but rather because the nation continues as a direct result of their efforts.

However, where the fiction and the fact depart is indeed in the aftermath of service. Unlike Captain America, real combat soldiers are not impervious to bullets and imbued with super strength and stamina. Indeed, becoming battle-ready is depicted in *Captain America Comics* as requiring no more than simply signing up. In contrast to the

[25] Barbour is talking specifically about a text that comes after World War II, *Marvel 1602*, in which Rogers "plays Indian" as "Rohjaz," a white-skinned native American who serves as the 17th-Century Captain America. However, such forms of cultural appropriation were not unheard of during the war.
[26] After leaving the FBI, Betty joins the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. Following the war, she changes her name to Betsy Ross before eventually taking over for Bucky as Captain America's new sidekick, Golden Girl.

real experience of boot camp and the constant physical training and conditioning required for military service, readying his body for service is almost comically simple for Steve Rogers: he volunteers, receives the miracle serum, and takes up his role with pride. Rogers is almost surprised in the first panel depicting his super-strength, his face wearing a bemused look as he flings aside Nazis (*CAC* #1). More than their physical frailty, however, was the perception of emotional or personal weakness amongst those who joined the war. Though forms of combat-induced stress reactions had been documented at least since the American Civil War (then called "soldier's heart"), prevailing attitudes about psychologically-wounded soldiers returning home understood their failure as a personal one, not a situational one. At first understood as a physical malady caused by unseen damage to the heart, nerves, or brain of soldiers, combat-induced stress reactions quickly turned after World War I into psychological deficiencies. In the early days of psychiatric analysis but especially by the middle of the Second World War, it was widely believed that combat stress reactions were a failure of masculinity. As Ann Elizabeth Pfau explains in *Miss Yourlovin: GIs, Gender, and Domesticity during World War II* (2008), commanding officers feared that "misguided maternal love threatened servicemen's physical, as well as mental, health" (12). Psychiatrists like Edward Strecker, then chair of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine's psychiatry department, contended in 1945 that "American 'moms' (as distinguished from mothers)" were to blame for "failure to 'wean' their male children" (Pfau 12). In some ways, Captain America's somewhat comical distancing from women and his preference for the company of men reinforces prevailing notions about the frailty of domestic femininity and its influence upon soldiers.

We must not forget, either, that immigrants and nonwhite combatants were not necessarily received with the same gusto as the Aryan *ubermensch* Steve Rogers. The complexly-woven, indeterminate roots of Steve Rogers' heritage--whether colonial American or Irish immigrant—are depicting as mattering less than the fact that he has inherited the duty of protecting the nation he represents. In practice, this was not true. Steve Rogers's "sacrifice" must be considered against the real effacement of self that nonwhite citizens and soldiers underwent in order to protect their homeland. Unlike, say, a Tuskegee Airman, who volunteered for service only to be derided and discriminated against both in the military and upon return from the battlefield, Captain America can return to his civilian self through the simple act of changing clothes. When compared with what he gains, the lost identity of Steve Rogers appears phantasmal: there is little of substance in the first run of *Captain America Comics* to suggest Rogers had anything to really sacrifice in service of the nation.

In fact, Captain America/Steve's separate personalities reinforces the utter difference between masculinity and femininity that the lack of women in *Captain America Comics* hints at. Captain America fights crime; Steve cleans the camp and prepares dinner. The civilian identity, aligned with Steve's immigrant history and his failures as a citizen to meaningfully contribute to the war effort, are rendered domestic, feminine, and therefore unworthy of anything but derisive laughter. They are, without exception, produced for comic effect, a counterpoint to the mighty Captain America's martial prowess and hypermasculine strength and virility. This connection is made explicit several times in the first ten issues, but one scene in particular entirely collapses the domestic/female and war/male dichotomy at work. In an infiltration attempt in

Germany, Captain America dresses as an old grandmother, escorting her grandson to see the continent (*CAC* #8). The Captain is comically rendered as that icon of overbearing feminine domesticity, the hobbling grandmother. Bucky too is clothed in ridiculous garb that overtly domesticates and feminizes him: a Little Lord Fauntleroy costume. Once a sign of Southern gentility and good upbringing, by 1941 the icon of Little Lord Fauntleroy was more often associated with "sissydom," or feminized boyhood. With great relief, the two heroes tear their costumes away to reveal their true, masculine selves: well-muscled, acrobatic, strong, gallant. Their costumes hug and accentuate the swaths of musculature that were hidden by layers of false clothing. The erotics of two men in spandex suits, glistening with sweat as they punch Nazis, is entirely uncommented upon.[27] These are the men America needs, the comic seems to say.

But what of the men who remained invisible on the comics page, the immigrants who had been promised masculine glory and wartime heroics? Masculinizing white citizens who chose military service had a secondary effect of feminizing the men who did not, and further feminizing nonwhite and immigrant groups who, whether by accident or design, were barred from military service. We cannot forget that the superhero tradition in the United States is almost entirely the product of the tireless work of immigrants, people of color, and women[28]. The most iconic American superheroes were created by

[27] At least by the comics themselves. So much work on the homoerotics of male companionship in superhero comics has been produced that giving even a smattering of it here would not do the efforts justice.

[28] The role Jewish immigrants, as well as other racial and ethnic immigrants to the United States, such as the Chinese and Japanese, played in the creation and proliferation of the American comic book cannot be overstated. See for example Danny Fingeroth's *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero* (Bloomsbury, 2007); Paul Buhle's *Jews and American Comics: An Illustrated History of an American Art Form* (The New Press, 2008); Arie Kaplan's *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books* (U Nebraska Press, 2008); Simcha Weinstein's *Up, Up, and Oy Vey: How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero* (Barricade Books, 2009); Fredrik Stromberg's *Jewish*

Jewish-American immigrants, such as Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster (*Superman*),[29] Bob Kane and Bill Finger (*Batman*), Will Eisner (*The Spirit*), and the aforementioned Jack Kirby and Joe Simon.[30] At the turn of the nineteenth century, Jewish masculinity became the targeted of demasculinizing stereotypes that spread widely and swiftly in the United States (Davison 10), a project that continued through influential Modernist writers' depictions of Jewish men as inherently feminized subjects (21). On one level, such feminization was possible because Jewishness was widely viewed as a racial, rather than religious identity (Singley 34). In some ways, we might understand the proliferation of hypermasculine superheroic *ubermensches* as a direct response to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' positioning of the Jewish male as barely different than the white female (Davison 21).

Such characterizations of nonwhite Americans as effeminate were not new, of course: large scale feminization of Chinese immigrants were critical to later race-based channeling of Chinese immigrants into service industries like laundromats, restaurants, and grocery stores, for example.[31] However, in idealizing the hypermasculine white American as the idol of both American military service and of American heroism, superhero comics such as *Captain America Comics* cast nonwhite, non-American subjects as essentially feminized and villainous individuals. This was nowhere more apparent than in the utter whitewashing of the American superhero comics canon in the

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*Images in the Comics* (Fantagraphics, 2012); and Harry Brod's *Superman Is Jewish?: How Comic Book Superheroes Came to Serve Truth, Justice, and the Jewish-American Way* (Free Press, reprint 2016).

[29] Shuster was a Canadian, no less.

[30]

[31] Notably, jobs that had often been held by children until child-labor laws eliminated young children from the workforce.

1930s and 1940s. Though there were indigenous heroes, such as Canadian comics outfit *Triumph-Adventure Comics*'s "Nelvana of the Northern Lights," inspired by a First Nations "arctic Madonna" whom painter Franz Johnston met during a trip into the Northwest Territories in the late 1930s ("Nelvana"), and *Blazing Comics*'s "Red Hawk," a Native American fighter pilot, nearly all reproduced white citizens' preconceptions of what indigenousness meant (*BC* #1, 1945). Deep segregation and the persistence of Jim Crow laws kept black heroes out of the mainstream comics business until 1966, when Kirby and Lee created Black Panther in *Fantastic Four* #52. This did not mean that underrepresented groups, including women, indigenous people, African Americans, and Asian Americans were not part of the industry; rather, much of the grunt work of the comics industry, from art reproduction, coloring, publication factory work, and distribution were carried out by nonwhite and female employees. However, attempts to represent these people as anything but marginalized was met with dual resistance from readers and from economic pressures.

What did this mean for young people reading nationalist superhero comics? Comic books, as one of the cheapest mass-produced forms of fiction available in the 1940s, sold millions of copies a year to teens of all races and across class boundaries; these numbers do not take into account newspaper sales, which mostly went to adults, but which nevertheless featured comics read frequently by younger readers. *Captain America Comics* even comments at one point that nonwhite, *non-American* readers have expressed interest in joining the Sentinels of Liberty, citing a letter from Mexico "*CAC* #4) while noting that these folks, as well as girls, can still join (same issue). In the whitewashing of national duty to the nation presented by *Captain America Comics* as well as other

superhero titles from the time, it becomes clear that the "normative" adolescent child assumed by comics creators is absolutely a white one. Readers who are not white are an afterthought, placed alongside foreign readers who cannot give service to the nation as citizens could.[32]

The blindspot of children of color in these comics replicates racial segregation in the armed forces around World War II. Despite growing enlistment by black men, regiments remained segregated in all forms of public display, including parades and transport, and sometimes even on the battlefield. While women of color could serve in the Women's Army Corps, they bore the brunt of racism from wounded white soldiers in hospitals throughout the war (Hagen). Of course, thanks to Roosevelt's policies, it was extremely difficult for an Asian-American of any lineage to join the service. Latino servicemen, who had been called in record numbers for World War I, were not categorized by the military according to ethnicity, but rather by whether they were light enough to pass for white. Many lighter-skinned Latinos were distributed to white regiments, while nearly all darker-skinned and Afro-Latinos, including mainland Puerto Ricans, were assigned to black regiments (Rochin and Fernandez 3). Even those who were assigned to white regiments reported racial discrimination (Green). While some 25,000 Native Americans served, most notably the Navajo "Code Talkers," by and large their service was sought out thanks to prevailing stereotypes about the "native warrior spirit." To truly serve the United States, according to fictional depictions of servicepeople and national systems of enlistment and decoration, one needed first to be a white citizen;

[32] It is worth mentioning that the US is not alone in the whitewashing of its heroic cultures. See Ryan Edwardson, "The Many Lives of Captain Canuck: Nationalism, Culture, and the Creation of a Canadian Comic Book Superhero," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 37.2 (2003): 184-202.

everyone else had to prove their worth. This is not to say that *all* nationalist superheroes reinforced this contention. However, the persistence of Captain America in the national psyche long after the war (and long after other nationalist heroes had been retired) suggests that Cap touched the pulse of the nation in ways other heroes did not.

## 3.2. TAPPING THE VEIN: CAPTAIN AMERICA AND CONSUMPTION

So far I have detailed how *Captain America Comics* captured the imagination of service-age men in the United States, entrancing them with the promise of incredible physical prowess, laudable wartime heroism, and the promise of a safe and productive nation after the war ended. Older teen readers, then, had their spandex-clad idol in Steve Rogers; all the better that he had joined the military to become Captain America. But for younger readers, some of whom would not have the chance to enlist in the war and take part in these exercises, how could *Captain America Comics* be so alluring? In part through the same mechanisms by which *Caddie Woodlawn* inscribed conspicuous consumption onto the identity of the Depression-era teenage girl, *Captain America Comics* suggested that consumption could be a natural part of American teenage boyhood as well. Through this gesture toward material culture and feelings of belonging, however, I want to suggest that *Captain America Comics* also helped to normalize self-surveillance practices that would prove the catalyst for an unprecedented change in youth culture after World War II. *Captain America Comics* achieved all this through its plucky teenage sidekick, Bucky Barnes, and his Sentinels of Liberty.

The teen culture of the 1940s could easily be characterized as a primarily material culture. As Grace Palladino explains, teens in the 1940s and 1950s were the target of

multiple marketing campaigns, all suggesting that they could purchase an identity through and number of new products on the market (109-10). This act of "conspicuous consumption," or the purchasing of items specifically to reflect cultural cachet or belonging, encouraged young people to explore their identities through the "freedom of the marketplace" (110). Through conspicuous consumption, even in the face of material rationing, most of the efforts of producers of teen culture were focused on finding ways to secure teen money. As Carolyn McNamara notes, with increased post-Depression income came increased money for kids. "Parents, now with income to spare," she writes, "were finally able to give their children what the Great Depression had denied them" (McNamara). And while Bradford Wright notes that they often spent that money on comic books (27), as I note in the first chapter, they also spent that money on books, films, toys, odds and ends, and membership fees for clubs and organizations. Through their purchasing, teens gained identity.

However abhorrent this process of materialist identification may seem, it was incredibly effective and would become the dominant social-economic paradigm in the United States for the majority of the 20th century. The unparalleled success of marketing and merchandising during the time wove together with already-extant membership traditions in the United States. Leading into the 1940s, one of the many ways that parents purchased their children's identities was through the process of club membership and participation. As I have chronicled elsewhere, youth groups sprang up in the United States between 1902 and 1912 with the advent of orienteering clubs and scouting organizations (Eveleth 71). Joining long-established organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association (est. 1851 in the US), clubs like the Fireside Indians, Camp Fire,

the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts quickly grew into some of the most influential components of American childhood. Their near ubiquitous influence produced an enormous market for conspicuous consumption of external, material signifiers of club membership (uniforms, patches, equipment, tents, and so on), but in addition the incredible growth in popularity of these clubs during the 1920s and 1930s spurred on even greater marketing and merchandising drives. The Edward Stratemeyer Syndicate, already influential for its serial chapter-book collections, such as *The Hardy Boys* (1927) and *Nancy Drew* (1930), began publishing unofficial but tolerated scouting novels branded with Camp Fire, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, and other scouting organization insignias and paraphernalia (Eveleth 73). The books, as Sherry L. Inness explains, were essentially trash, but cheap trash at a mere fifty cents apiece while featuring color covers (95). The works combined to generate a massive boom in scouting membership throughout the 1930s and 1940s (Eveleth 73, note 5).

Marketed mostly to youth aged twelve to twenty, the Stratemeyer Syndicate's books were enormously successful and profitable. Stratemeyer Syndicate books, scouting organizations and other novel marketplace goods, such as the glossy monthly juvenile magazine (dated at around 1927 by Theodore Peterson, 157) and its usurper, the pulp comic book (which Kim Munson dates to around 1935, 23) sold children a particularized version of childhood that served the purposes of the marketers and merchandisers who profited from it: a kid's personality was determined primarily by what they bought and who they associated with. But even as these aims served to increase consumer spending from younger and younger populations (and from the parents of those individuals), these various sources all told similar tales about what it meant to be an American boy or

American girl in the US in the 1930s and 1940s. Boys especially were targeted in ways that depicted them as essentially physical actors in the world, the doers, makers, movers, and shakers who would shape the nation and the global system in which it increasingly participated. These depictions came to a head in early 1940, as concerns of war with Europe grew in the United States. Here, we would see the birth of a new icon for American masculinity: Captain America. With him came Bucky Barnes and an opportunity to get kids to "buy into" the war effort psychologically: through the "Sentinels of Liberty."

By 1941, it was widely accepted, even in the education establishment, that, alongside their adult counterparts, children and adolescents read comic books. To engage with their dual readership, comics creators worked on two fronts: in the peritextual materials that accompanied the stories and in the characters and stories themselves. Comics themselves were a component of material culture: seeing one sticking out of the back pocket or bicycle basket of a nearby kid could suggest camaraderie, after all. Comics came in forty-to-fifty-page packages of stories, sometimes on the same hero but usually individual episodes for different storylines, interspersed with ads, letters, and short stories. These were not always regarded as mere stuffing to fill out a magazine order; J. Richard Stevens explains that, in the 1940s, comics were largely regarded as useful literacy tools for educators (607-8). Even before this, comic strips had been a source of working-class literacy exposure via the newspaper for nearly three decades (Munson 22). Between the misspelled words and unpunctuated statements that littered the speech bubbles of these stories, writers had space for "novelettes," two-to-three-page stories featuring the title character. Sometimes written by the primary author of the issue

and sometimes by an extra--Stan Lee, the undisputed King of Marvel in the 21st century, wrote one of Cap's first novelettes--these stories used diction and textual pacing, rather than visual representation, to craft a story. Though certainly not high literature, these short verbal interludes did expose readers to fully-realized sentences, paragraphs, and story arcs. The basic literacy concerns addressed in comics--associating objects with names, learning dialogue, reading action, and so on--gave way to higher-level concerns in such prose sections, which also served as more focused reading material for older readers. These sections provided a break between the scannable pages of Cap clobbering Nazis. In addition, they were easily digestible in length, rarely if ever going on for longer than five pages, making them ideal late-night reading to be abandoned quickly or fallen asleep over. These two expectations for comics diverged in the 1960s, with more visuals-heavy superhero comics remaining largely associated with youth for the next twenty years and more text-heavy "graphic novels" being explicitly associated with adulthood until the late 1990s (Chaney 58; Eveleth 133).

Other peritextual clues, such as advertisements, indicate that comics readership was split between young-adult (18-25) men and teenage boys. These also contributed much more heavily to the ocean of mass-market stuff in which teen culture was awash. Many comics featured advertisements for wearables obviously intended for older adults (*Blazing Comics* #1 features, for example, a male girdle) or the infamous Charles Atlas exercise programs aimed at scrawny weaklings tired of being insulted in front of their girls. However, the vast majority of comics publishers, knowing their audience was mainly teenage boys, advertised exotic material effluvium like build-it-yourself clock radios, X-ray spectacles, trick yo-yos, home sleight-of-hand magic kits, and a wide

variety of gag objects like buzzers, spraying lapel flowers, and glasses with fake mustaches attached. The preponderance of toys and junk populating the pages of most comics for young people gestures toward the growing demographication of the marketplace, by which specific groups of consumers were sold objects that carried symbolic identification unique to that group.

Indeed, comics were one of the first fully-realized methods of advertising to children developed in the 1930s and 1940s (Lusted 20). Comics were so saturated with marketing and product placement that publishers produced comics that were obviously spokesmen for goods: the adventures of characters like *Captain Tootsie* (Tootsie Rolls candy), *R.C. and Quickie* (RC Cola), *The Pepsi Cola Cop* (Pepsi Cola), and even Victor Fox's *The Kooba Kid*, which marketed a cola that did not yet exist but which Fox hoped would generate interest in a licensing agreement, flew off the shelves. These comics were mostly advertisements with spare comic strips in between, and all lured away the allowances of teen boys nationwide. It didn't hurt that they sold colas at the same time.

Unlike similarly-styled "leatherneck" comics--comics written for and sold mostly to servicemen at home and abroad--*Captain America Comics* was marketed almost exclusively to teen boys (though still read by adults, as letters indicate [*CAC* #4]), as evidenced by its advertising material. We can make this judgment based on many features, but nowhere is this distinction more obvious than the advertisements that appear in these early issues. Interestingly, however, *Captain America Comics* refrained from the standard adverts normally found in comics for teenage boys for axes and toy guns--perhaps the too obvious choice for a comic about wartime service. Instead, the lone advertisement (aside from other issues of Timely/Marvel comics) was an invitation to

join Captain America's "Sentinels of Liberty." For a mere ten cents, a boy could get a badge, "made of the same metal as police and fireman badges," and a membership card to proudly display on the schoolyard. Importantly, the Sentinels of Liberty required a pledge. In the first issue, cover date April 1941,[33] readers would "solemnly pledge to uphold the principles of the Sentinels of Liberty and assist Captain America in his war against spies in the USA" (*CAC* #1.8).[34]

Here, the material indicators of official service to the nation, its laws, and its leaders is highlighted. Teen culture of the 1940s was awash in material indicators of group belonging, from the boy and girl scouts with their uniforms, sashes, and patches to write-in clubs with their cheap metal pins and membership cards. On one level, pins, buttons, and patches in the 1940s were a precursor to the heightened sense of consumerism and materiality that characterized the 1950s. But on another, these items were replications of indicators of adult authority and rank. This is especially true for the Sentinels of Liberty. The materiality of the badge, in contrast to the cheaply reproducible "tin pins" that most fake badges were made of, suggested to young readers that the Sentinels of Liberty was not just another write-in club; it was a legitimate path to serving the community and the nation just like a police officer, firefighter, or military serviceman would. The pledge and membership card used official-sounding language that, as we shall see, gained a more nationalistic tone over the next few months. Even as the objects that came with the identity of a Sentinel were therefore the stuff of mass market teen culture, they also emulated adult life in important ways.

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[33] Cover dates of comics are often a month *after* the comic has been created. This will be very important in *Captain America Comics* #9, cover date December 1941.

[34] When citing comics, I follow the *Comic*, Issue #, Page Number, and Panel format when possible.

Through the Sentinels of Liberty, the creators of *Captain America Comics* seem to recognize the power that material involvement can exert upon the development of one's identity. More than the effluvium of childhood in the 1940s, the plastic gimmicks and cheap whiz-bang toys, the Sentinels of Liberty represented an opportunity for teenage readers to find a niche identity that came with a ready-made community. So as much as *Captain America Comics* willfully and gleefully enjoyed the rush of revenue brought on by material culture, its creators were also concerned with providing a lesson to the masses of young readers they had enraptured. Through identification with the Sentinels, Simon and Kirby enlisted adolescent subjects as active wartime heroes on the home front. Nowhere was this more striking—or, as we shall see, more prescient—than in Bucky's call for the Sentinels to become the covert operatives of the United States military's home force.

## 3.2. JOIN UP! ENLISTING ADOLESCENTS ON THE HOME FRONT

Indeed, materialism and capitalistic identity-formation was just one of the cultural powers laid at the feet of adolescents during the 1940s. In addition to their buying power, increasing numbers of teenagers in relation to adults meant that teens, who would eventually reach voting age, were becoming the core of American democracy. Adults concerned about how the United States would evolve once it emerged from the war wanted to control the kinds of values those teens would vote into policy when they came of age. As Palladino writes, citing from *Seventeen* magazine, the cultural suggestion was the teens needed to inspire parents, friends, and the community at large to "build a better world" (92). One of the ways that this could be achieved well in advance of the age of

majority was to normalize certain behaviors and radicalize others. The wartime period is when many of the pervasive cultural beliefs that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, leading to youth rebellion, would be tested and normalized. Perhaps the most visible of these, and the most important to my overview of the creation of iconic adolescence, is the normalization of self-surveillance, self-policing, and personal modulation. As Captain America normalized wartime service, his sidekick Bucky Barnes normalized surveillance at home. As Cap enabled the enlistment of adults into the various theaters of war, Bucky enabled the enlistment of adolescents as agents of government surveillance through the so-called "Sentinels of Liberty."

On the surface, the Sentinels of Liberty look like any other comic superhero's fanclub might, with badges, meetings, and the like, organized mostly through the efforts of its members. The earliest issue, cited above, merely states that members "solemnly pledge to uphold the principles of the Sentinels of Liberty and assist Captain America in his war against spies in the USA." While this somewhat vague pledge initially reads as mere in-universe writing styled to maintain immersion for young fans, it would soon take on a strangely nationalistic tone that would be important to normalizing certain mechanisms of domestic control.

Consider the tone and phrasing of the second issue's pledge (see figure 1). Though immediately and obviously nationalistic at first, important changes in phrasing demonstrate a massive shift in purpose (see Figure 1). In this newly revised advertisement, Captain America calls for his readers to "join up," and "enlist **now** in CAPTAIN AMERICA'S great young army of spy-fighters and help free our country of its **traitors!**" (*CAC* #2.15). In return for ten cents and a signed, addressed affidavit to

"join Captain America's Sentinels of Liberty & help to fight spies and traitors to the U.S.A.," purchasers receive the Sentinel of Liberty badge and a revised membership card. The card's new "Pledge to Principles" removes the circular language of the first, stating instead that the holder promises:

1. In God We Trust.
2. Allegiance to the flag and the Constitution of the United States of America.
3. To make myself a better citizen and defend my government forever. (*CAC* #2.15)

At the bottom of the page, in case a reader is still not assured of the value of this pledge, a splash declares that "*Every* red-blooded young American boy and girl will be proud to be a member of


*Figure 1. Sentinels of Liberty advertisement from* Captain America Comics #2*, May 1941.*

this club!" (*CAC* #2.15, emphasis in original). If there were any doubts about the purpose of the Sentinels of Liberty in *Captain America Comics* #1, it has been made abundantly clear: these young people form the "home force" of openly and proudly patriotic citizens, striving to defend Democracy and America from all threats, foreign and domestic.

By the fourth issue, cover date July 1941, the advert had changed tone yet again (see Figure 2). Reminding everyone of their goal of "100,000 members by the Fourth of July," Captain America implored readers to "become a SENTINEL OF LIBERTY and join more than 20,000 patriotic young Americans in a noble crusade against spies, fifth columnists, and traitors to the **United States of America!!!"** (*CAC* #4.16). This issue introduced a Sentinels of Liberty newsletter, full of activities like mazes and face-finding games, and also featured letters from the Captain and his sidekick, Bucky (Figure 3). Most importantly, this first newsletter introduced a training exercise crucial to wartime security: codebreaking. Captain America orders his charges to learn the "Sentinel of Liberty SECRET CODE," or "the secret code you've all been asking for" (*CAC* #4.14) and gives the key to all subsequent codes in the newsletter. At first, these are relatively innocuous codes: hidden messages from Cap and his crew saying things like "buy *Captain America Comics*." However, they will soon take on a more obvious role as indicator of loyalty or evidence of betrayal.

*Captain America Comics* #6, cover date September 1941, uses the same language in its call to become a Sentinel of Liberty, but adds an unprecedented wall of text to the advertisement (see Figure 4). The letter mimics presidential language in public addresses. Luridly titled, the letter "CAPTAIN AMERICA DECLARES A "STATE OF UNLIMITED JUNIOR NATIONAL EMERGENCY!" (*CAC* #6.16) goes on to state that

it comes “from the desk of CAPTAIN AMERICA, National Commander-in-chief of the Sentinels of Liberty” (*CAC* #6.14). Cap writes:


*Figure 2. Sentinels of Liberty advertisement*, Captain America Comics #4, *July 1941*.

> In these days of stress and danger to our native land, it is the duty of every Sentinel of Liberty to devote all his energies to the guarding of American Liberty and Freedom!
>
> It is for this purpose that The Sentinels of Liberty are being organized upon a great, nation-wide scale! (*CAC* #6.16)

The so-called "Commander-in-chief" then introduces "Charters of Membership" for groups of sentinels above fifteen members, with special authorization to elect a "Captain" for each club. This Captain is thereby deputized to report on the conduct of the club's members, ostensibly for good: "If I approve of the report, I'll authorize the Captain to appoint the two Sentinels as Lieutenants under him" (*CAC* #6.16). In one fell swoop, Captain America has instituted a militarily-regimented system of clubs amongst adolescent readers, complete with systems of merit for "patriotic deeds" and promotions for reporting those deeds, up to General for Captains who receive merits. Mimicking the tone, phrasing, and use of military lingo in presidential addresses concerned with the war ("state of emergency," "commander-in-chief") helps to normalize this language for young people even beyond the boundaries of the military complex. More troublingly, however, Captain America has set up a communication system by which adolescent citizens can take part in the reporting of each other's activities: in essence, spying on the citizenry for the good of the country.

The twin threads of secret codes and secret reports would intertwine in a curiously prescient issue of *Captain America Comics*, issue 9, cover date December 1941. In this issue, two major developments in the newsletter are worth mentioning: first, the newly-

established Sentinels of Liberty charters are given coded passwords: one for entry and one for exit. The


*Figure 3. Sentinels of Liberty Secret Club News, including a codebreaking exercise that will give the entry and exit passwords for the next issue.*

initial passwords, of course, are LIBERTY and JUSTICE. But what is especially interesting is the echo here of an earlier story within *Captain America Comics* #4, "The Unholy Legion." In that story, Bucky infiltrates a secret Nazi organization by uttering their password, "Down with Democracy!" After passing this initial test, however, Bucky is revealed to be a spy by his inability to produce the *second* password: a swastika branded on the chest. In this way, the dual-password is suggestive of how effective infiltrators of organizations are: they require double-layered protection to root out. In addition to the double-passwords (coded through the earlier code mechanism from issue 3), Bucky sets out a challenge for his readers to watch the skies, tracking the number and direction of travel of airplanes. Given that this missive was written before the issue went to publication in December of 1941, it is eerie how fortuitous Bucky's call would be for the fate of America heading to war. And yet, in the next issue, Bucky pays the events of December 7 no mind; he merely reminds his fellow Sentinels that they need to be writing reports about the flight patterns of overhead planes.

The call to act as defenders of the homeland was not merely suggested by advertisements and enlistment calls sent out by the Sentinels of Liberty. Rather, it was directly demonstrated to readers. In *CAC* #5, coverdate August 1941, the Sentinels of Liberty are directly impressed into service in the story "Killers of the Bund" (see figure 5). Bucky, leading a Sentinels meeting in his Army uniform, tells the diverse group of sentinels[35] that they have "voted unanimously to act as secret agents for ***Captain America***" and will "locate more hidden Bund hideouts so Cap can mop 'em up!" (*CAC*

[35] Including a zoot-suited gollywog child.

#5.6). The panel immediately under this call to action shows a plucky lad nearly falling into a basement window as he “listen[s] to their plans” (ibid.). In the next, a boy

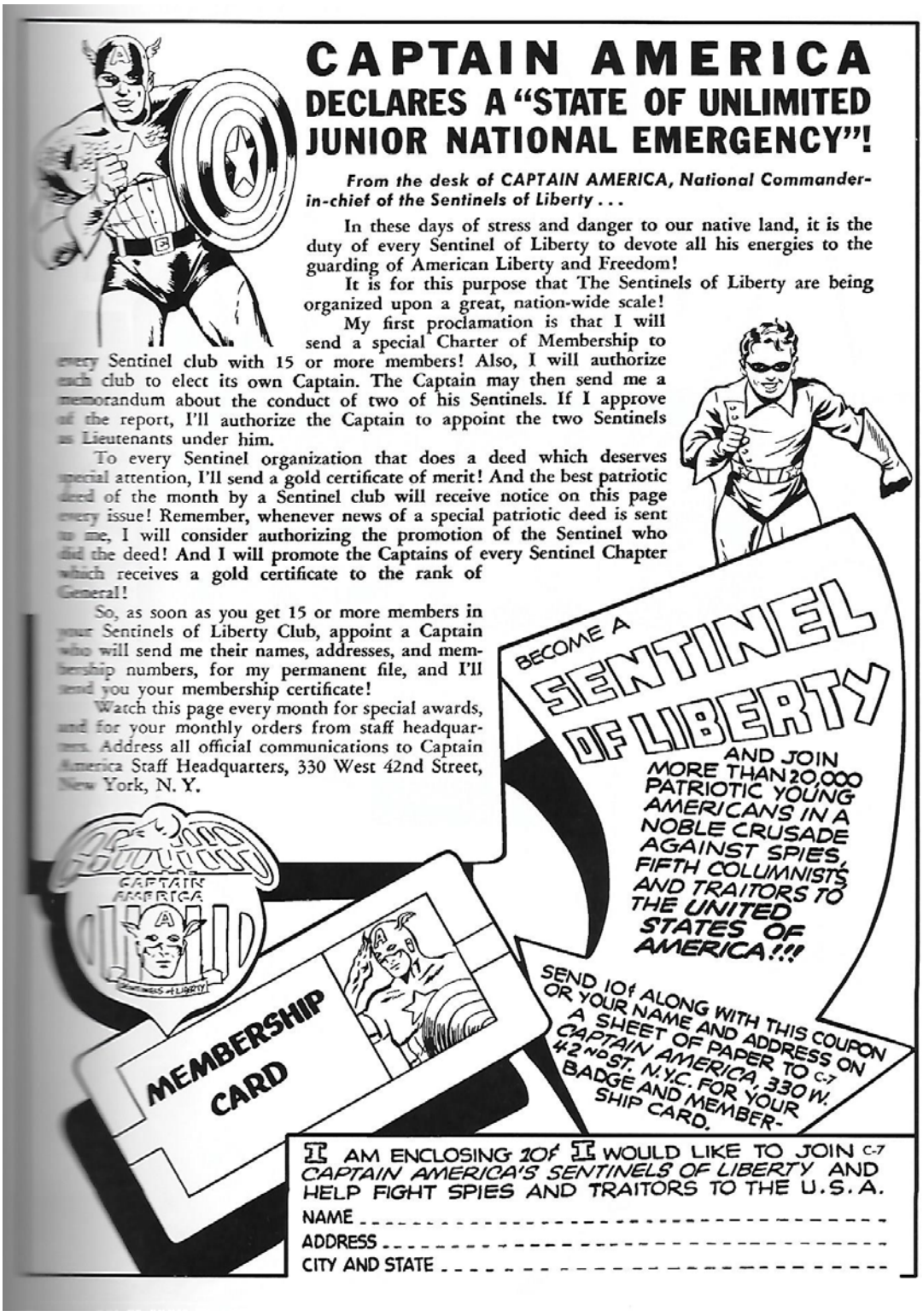


*Figure 4. Sentinels of Liberty advertisement,* Captain America Comics #6, *September 1941.*

pretends to draw at the local soda fountain while eavesdropping on two overtly German characters. One, swilling a stein of foaming beer and wearing a pencil mustache and a lazy imitation of the Fuhrer's hairstyle, opines "**Ya Hans!** Ve vill blow up der dam like our leader says!" The other, staring morosely into his half-empty glass of schnapps, replies that "Dis time, I hope der pay is goot!" (ibid.). Bucky, meanwhile, has followed a suspect to his "cabin in the woods" and overhears a remarkably ugly man assuring "Herr Shnitzel" that some men are "attending to" the matter of "dot svine," Captain America (ibid.). Not only are the Sentinels trespassing and eavesdropping on private conversations, but they are also following men to their cabins in the woods!

From learning to decipher and utilize secret codes, wearing physical indicators of organizational belonging like badges, taking part in the protection of the homeland from traitors, and charting the flight patterns of unauthorized flying objects, the Sentinels of Liberty idealized a kind of service that children could perform for the homeland. Though it was an organization run entirely by the folks at Timely Comics, nevertheless the Sentinels of Liberty borrowed militaristic and presidential language to offer legitimacy to Captain America's recruitment drives. But the Sentinels were not, after all, the first organization to utilize paramilitary branding and language in the recruitment of children to the ideological causes of the powerful. Rather, these efforts, as I note above, were rooted in an English coloniality of the late Victorian years, dating in the United States to roughly 1900. More eerily yet, the very same expectations of uniformity, loyalty, hardiness, training, and intellectual study were the very same pillars on which Germany's only official boys club, the *Hitlerjugend*, or Hitler Youth, were founded. The Hitler Youth appropriated many of their acitivites and symbology from the Boy Scouts,

outlawed in Germany in 1935, though where democracy and capitalism were trumpeted in the United


*Figure 5. The Sentinels take on one of their first tasks as home front defenders for Captain America.*

States, racism and socialism was the focus of the Hitler Youth (Zentner and Bedürftig 434-5). Even the uniform's symbology was appropriated from the Boy Scouts, albeit with many changes in accordance with Nazi military symbology (Stephens 43). Though the Sentinels did not maintain uniforms or marching maneuvers, they did institute socialization activities that were ostensibly aimed at protecting American freedoms on the home front. Where the Hitler Youth broke up church groups, spied on religious classes and bible studies, and attempted to infiltrate the hideouts of wayward Jews, the Sentinels of Liberty focused their efforts on anyone in the neighborhood who acted strangely, perhaps by not purchasing war bonds, by continuing to wear long dresses despite material rationing, or by having a foreign-sounding accent.

Though Bucky was a sidekick, his contributions to the shaping of teen culture in the 1940s and into the 1950s may actually be greater than Captain America's were. Indeed, Bucky's role as an idealized version of the Captain America reader should not be overlooked. As much as Captain America, once a scrawny weakling who might appear in an Atlas short, represented the dreams of glory for many service-age young men, Bucky symbolized militarized citizenship for the under-age set. Certainly, Bucky capitalized on stereotypes about childhood that enabled them to be great spies and reporters of behavior: their as-yet unformed beliefs about the social order and their ability to see and hear just about everything without being noticed. Bucky's origin story reinforces these assumptions. After regaling Steve Rogers with tales of Cap's supremacy, Barnes stumbles in on him changing into his Captain America super-suit. Rogers takes on Barnes as Bucky Barnes, sidekick to Captain America, strangely deeming him not worthy of a

super-title, in order to "keep the secret" between the two of them. Strangely, Steve has to mask his identity as Captain America, while Bucky wears it on his shirt (in badge form).

This apparent oversight is actually critical: where Steve Rogers maintains his identity beyond Captain America (such as it is, punctuated primarily by stable work, peeling potatoes, and the rare chance to be an extra in a film), Bucky's identity as super-boy and camp mascot are

combined into one. Bucky therefore experiences no internal struggle to be something other than who he is; Cap's frequent need to play the bumbling, incompetent private in order to maintain his cover is nowhere to be found in Bucky's experience of heroism.

## 3.4. "HE'S VERY PROUD OF US FOR LIVING UP TO OUR PLEDGES": INDOCTRINATING YOUTH, CREATING OUTSIDERS

In many ways, this difference between Rogers and Barnes is suggestive of the differing expectations for men and boys, respectively, during the leadup to the war. Men were expected to cultivate a life "back home" for when maneuvers were finished, the better to maintain the nation through families. Beyond that, most adults in 1941 were, like Steve Rogers, born and raised during or after the first World War,[36] and as such had no personal experience of conflict. Boys in the 1940s, on the other hand, had such expectations laid upon them from the start. Unlike their adult male counterparts, these youngsters were trained from a young age in the practice of militarism through membership in paramilitary organizations like the Boy Scouts. To them, the duties of citizen and serviceman began to coalesce into a single, unified identity. Placing the object

[36] Rogers was born, of course, on July 4, 1920 (*Captain America* #283, July 1983).

of their protection at home further unified the role of son and patriot; protect the homestead while the men are away. Boys and girls encouraged to join paramilitary organizations during the 1940s learned to live a life guided by wartime principles. Everything was given in service of the country, from scraps to sons. The Boy Scouts served as "poster boys" during this time, putting up the iconic posters of Uncle Sam's message, Rosie the Riveter's biceps, and Seymour R. Goff's admonition against loose lips; the Girl Scouts collected silk and other textiles for reuse in parachutes and other sundries.

Bucky's profound knowledge of the war, its maneuvers, and the experience of being wholly committed to the war effort sets the tone for readers looking at Cap's misadventures as an escape from the doldrums of everyday life. Living as he does on an Army base, every part of Bucky's life is saturated with the concerns of an American military at war. Importantly, though, Bucky is never represented as having chosen this life; it was thrust upon him. Nevertheless, he enthusiastically supports the war effort.[37] The creation of the paramilitary Sentinels of Liberty club, of which Bucky is the first member, offers a unique opportunity for readers who have not yet engaged in the practices of wartime organization to "become" Captain America's sidekick in the nation at-large. Readers are invited to take part in the subjective experience of giving service to the nation. The badge, as an icon and a material marketing tool, encapsulates the power of this object to influence identity. Made out of the same materials as police and fire

[37] In a much later storyline (Ed Brubaker's *Captain America and Bucky* #620, 2011) it is revealed that Bucky was orphaned at Camp Lehigh when his father died during an accident in basic training. This in part explains Bucky's seemingly nonsensical place on an active military training base. Though the storyline is a fairly recent addition, nevertheless it reinforces that Bucky was (quite literally) *made* to be a soldier and nothing else (see Jackson Guice and Ed Brubaker, *The Winter Soldier* #1, Marvel Comics: 2012).

badges, rather than "cheap button pins," the Sentinel Badge is therefore laden with significance as a symbol of office. That membership requires a pledge, a membership card, a badge, and registration into a charter only enhances the experience of belonging and identity Sentinels experienced. At the same time, these trappings serve as external, readable markers of one's dedication to the national wartime project, as well as a traceable documentation of one's absolute self-effacement to the nation.

It is no surprise, given these elements of subjectivity that accompany Sentineldom, that the Sentinel Pledges echo various pledges American citizens were expected to make: the Pledge of Allegiance, formally adopted by Congress in 1942, and the Oath of Allegiance, spoken by immigrants as the last barrier to citizenship. The then-current Pledge of Allegiance goes thus: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Ironically, as *Captain America Comics* emerged, the Pledge of Allegiance was under fire from religious groups who abstained from violence, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, as idolatry. In 1940, the Pledge was compulsory in schools (*Minersville SD v. Gobitis*, 310 U.S. 586, 1940); in 1943, the Supreme Court would reverse this decision (*West Virginia SBD v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 1943). Including such language as "pledging allegiance to the flag" in the Sentinel pledge tacitly, if not overtly, solidifies the Pledge of Allegiance as necessary to the shaping of schoolchildren's lives.

The Sentinel pledge also bears a passing resemblance to the Oath of Allegiance, spoken by immigrants in order to secure citizenship to the United States. The version of the Oath of Allegiance spoken between 1929 and 1950 is thus:

> I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.

For the sake of comparison, here again is the basic form of the Sentinels of Liberty pledge of allegiance:

1. In God We Trust.
2. Allegiance to the flag and the Constitution of the United States of America.
3. To make myself a better citizen and defend my government forever. (*CAC* #2.15)

The Sentinels pledge replicates the Oath's statement of renunciation and abjection of allegiance to foreign sovereignty in much simpler language: Sentinels promise to protect the nation from spies, traitors, fifth columnists, and other internal threats. The Sentinels pledge replicates the Oath's statement of fealty to the US, its Constitution, and its laws in simpler, symbological terms, by having children pledge allegiance to flag that symbolizes those things. Finally, the Sentinels pledge implies the Oath of Allegiance's freely and without duress section by placing the impetus within the child's desire to "make

themselves a better citizen." All of this too is neatly packaged under the graces of (an American) God.

These similarities are especially interesting given that children beyond the United States read *Captain America Comics* and, in some cases, applied for membership. In the first reader letter printed in the Sentinel newsletter, Captain America lauds a Mexican boy's desire to join the cause, writing that certainly he may, whether a citizen or not (*CAC* #8.15). Whether real or fabricated, this letter suggests two things: first, that all who shall openly and proudly protect the Sentinels (and, by extension, the US) are welcome in its ranks; and second, that those who are not citizens can take the oath by denouncing their foreign allegiances. Such denunciations are, of course, difficult to prove, just as remaining loyal is difficult to prove without active subversion. These lines of the Oath were, however, much of the basis for discrimination against immigrants in the United States, especially those of German, Italian, and Japanese descent. However difficult to prove, the possibility of lingering fealty was enough for Roosevelt to pass his executive orders.

By 1953, the following text had been added to the Oath of Allegiance: "that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law." The addition of these elements makes clear the expectations that Bucky, Captain America, and their creation, the Sentinels of Liberty, have for their members: to sacrifice for the nation, whether in military action or in other nationally important situations.

Taken together, the two drives inherent in the Sentinels of Liberty's pledge are reflections of changes in wartime masculinity and identity more broadly construed. On the one hand, Bucky's charges are called upon to swear loyalty to the nation through an organization that functions as a symbol of larger apparatuses of American independence. The institutions named represent a specific vision of the United States, one that is explicitly Christian ("In God We Trust"), committed to democracy and all its symbols ("Allegiance to the flag and the Constitution of the United States of America") dedicated to the enhancement of the individual ("To make myself a better citizen"), and dependent upon militarized action to survive ("defend my government forever"). Moreover, in order to ensure that these ideals remain enshrined in the American mindset, the organizations involved call for surveillance and reporting of the allegiances of not only members of the group, but civilians in general and citizens as a whole. From these two forms of patriotic duty to the nation by teenage boys, we can glean that not only was it important to develop a homogenous, uniform masculinity (all the more easily prepared for military service), but so too was it crucial to monitor that development and correct those who stepped out of line. These concerns would evolve in the Cold War into widespread paranoia and anxiety amongst teenagers, especially males.

## 3.5. NORMALIZING SURVEILLANCE, BOUNDING THE NORMAL, DEMONIZING THE TEEN

When discussing the rise of youth culture in the Atomic Age (after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and into the Cold War) many critics highlight two key features utilized by the political and cultural establishment to enforce compliance: surveillance (of self and

community) and conformity. Both are on display in the first ten issues of *Captain America Comics*: paramilitary surveillance on the part of the juvenile readers enlisted into the Sentinels of Liberty, and conformity in the genre-defining white masculine body Captain America gains through his sacrifice to the greater good. That these messages were disseminated to the boys and men who would eventually attempt to reproduce them through the working-class, lowbrow medium of comic books resonates with their inherent calls to erase difference in order to serve the country. As Cohan notes,

> The war--with its disruption of class division, atmosphere of sexual deprivation, and deflation of traditional heroism--was a significant catalyst in breaking down ideological walls that had previously differentiated working- and middle-class men, in effect, bringing "gendered" and "sexual" conceptions of masculinity into greater contention. [...] xiv

As comic books spread from the primarily working-class readers who dominated the market in 1930 to the middle-and working-class men who emerged from the war in 1945, they brought with them the monolithic, hypermasculinized figure of the American superhero as the icon of patriotism. Ironically, the very image of maleness that thousands and thousands of men turned to for guidance was the product of efforts by some of the nation's most feminized male subjects. These racial divides would become yet more pronounced as the delirium of defeating Hitler wore off and the realities of the Cold War set in. Left without strong male figures to idealize and reeling from the hypermasculine propaganda that dominated the war years, the United States would face a "crisis of masculinity" (Cohan xii) that would grip the nation in the 1950s. This, in turn, became a

concern that would have critical implications for how adolescence would be constructed during the Cold War.

But what of that vehicle of mass market ideology, the comic book? Within just a few years, comic books would be deemed to be unsuitable for children. Led by highly visible attacks from government agents, psychiatrists, and social commentators like J. Edgar Hoover, John Mason Brown, and Fredric Wertham, comics became one of a myriad of demonized scapegoats for "the alarming juvenile delinquency rate with which the nation is faced" (Hoover, 1951). By 1948, Kim Munson explains, "cities across the United States had begun to limit sales of comics" to juveniles (27). Early efforts to create a governing body and enforce a self-regulatory code through the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers were met with further attacks by Hoover and Wertham, eventually resulting in the creation of the Comics Code Authority in 1954, a rough analogue to Hollywood's Hays Code. At first blush, and has commentators such as Carol Tilley have noted, these attacks seem merely to be scapegoating efforts designed to conceal erstwhile malfeasance by the commentators themselves (Wertham especially).

The truth, however, may be murkier. It is undeniably and demonstrably true that the comics industry's governing body, the "Comics Code Authority," misused its power to censor progressive ideas such as desegregation and the advancement of the black race (Munson 30; Eveleth 2014). For example, the Comics Code Authority rendered Entertaining Comics's "Judgment Day," a story featuring a black astronaut, "unsuitable" (effectively killing its sales) for no reason other than the fact that the astronaut was black (in *Weird Fantasy* March-April 1953).[38] It is also true that many of the preventative

[38] The owner of Entertaining Comics (EC) was Maxwell Gaines, one of the most important figures in comics history. Gaines pioneered the four-color, saddle-stitched newsprint pamphlet, the cheap and

measures designed to candy-coat comics by eliminating unsavory elements such as crime and horror comics were quickly undermined: thanks to economic pressures from failing to meet CCA restrictions, Entertaining Comics stopped producing comic books to focus on a title that would dog Wertham until his death: *Mad Magazine*. Moreover, the CCA lost power as fewer and fewer creators bought into the model, leading to the creation and mass proliferation of the "comix" scene, led by creator-owners like Robert Crumb, Will Eisner, and Art Spiegelman. These efforts ushered in an era of unprecedentedly adult-oriented comics in the 1960s.

We must not misunderstand the purpose of censorship by taking its purported service at face value; comics were a business, and business was booming in the late 1940s. As Munson notes, in the two years immediately following the formation of the CCA "the number of comic titles published annually dropped from about 650 to 300, and eighteen publishers disappeared, with no new ones entering the field (30; Wright 179). Publisher efforts to censor comics were more importantly efforts to stave off insolvency. Once the market would not support the vision of adolescence supported during the war, publishers turned to other formulations to make money. Many superhero comics creators, such as Jerry Siegel, co-creator of Superman, had always been suspicious of the motives of the comics publishing industry in the 1930s and 1940s. In a November letter to J. Edgar Hoover in the wake of the "marijuana of the nursery" speech, Siegel blasted the comics publishing establishment for misrepresenting the role of authors in creating what had been characterized as "seditious" material. He writes, in part that he "loaded the

---

infinitely reprintable format that comics used to overtake magazines in profitability. EC went on to republish the story in *Incredible Science Fiction* 33 (Jan-Feb 1956).

comics with hair-raising excitement and blood-shed, because that is the kind of stuff that the publishers and I knew would sell to the kids. We knew it paid off in big money." He goes on to note, however, that "some 'educators' writing pro-comics articles were receiving payments from NATIONAL COMICS PUBLICATIONS, Inc., 480 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. - publishers of SUPERMAN." Siegel then launches into an anti-industry rant that has only recently been discussed in comics scholarship:

> I often wonder why, in your anti-lurid comics articles and discussions, you never touched on the background of the publishers who manufactured comics trash for profit. What sort of publications did these publishers publish before getting what has been termed the 'marihuanna [sic] of the bassinet'?. [sic] Do any of them have criminal or communist records? Did any of them specialize in publishing lewd magazines with titles like "Hot Stories" and "Paris Nights" before venturing into the green pastures of the comics field? Were any of them ever prosecuted by the Society of the Suppression of Vice?
>
> Several years ago NATIONAL COMICS PUBLICATIONS, Inc. was assailed by Hearst columnist George E. Sokolsky for having published a propaganda comic strip, "Johnny Everyman," with the co-operation of Pearl Buck and the East-West Association. Sokolsky charged a communistic taint was involved.
>
> I thought you might be interested in having these questions raised by an ex-member of the inner comics fold. What happens to God-like SUPERMAN is no longer a matter of concern to me, since the publishers of SUPERMAN have maneuvered me to a point where I am destitute and they continue making enormous profits from my creation. Any day I expect to be extradited and prosecuted for non-support of my child due to lack of funds.
>
> SUPERMAN, mighty champion of the downtrodden and oppressed, makes fat profits for his selfish, greedy owners while his creator is faced with poverty.[39]

[39] The entire letter is included as Figure 6.

Hoover's response is, as one would expect, a form letter with an attachment regarding his stance on juvenile delinquency.[40] At the bottom of the response, most likely a note to the underling who would send this terse response and attachment to Mr. Siegel, is the sum of the FBI's files on "Jerry Siegels" residing the US. Fortunately, it notes no record of seditious or communistic

[40] The response is included as Figure 7.

50 Knightsbridge Rd.
Great Neck, L.I., N.Y.

JERRY SIEGEL

9-1

Dear Friend:

In the past you have been concerned with articles lambasting "bad comics". I ought know plenty about the subject because I created the SUPERMAN comic strip, the strip which deals with a God-like miracle-worker who aids the downtrodden with his smashing fists. Sure, I loaded the comics with hair-raising excitement and bloodshed, because that is the kind of stuff that the publishers and I knew would sell to the kids. We knew it paid off in big money.

I also know that some "educators" writing pro-comics articles were receiving payments from NATIONAL COMICS PUBLICATIONS, Inc., 480 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y., publishers of SUPERMAN.

I often wonder why, in your anti-lurid comics articles and discussions, you never touched on the background of the publishers who manufacture comics trash for profit. What sort of publications did these publishers publish before getting on the comics gravy train, and producing for the nation's impressionable youth what has been termed the "marihuanna of the bassinet"? Do any of them have criminal or communist records? Did any of them specialize in publishing lewd magazines with titles like "Hot Stories" and "Paris Nights" before venturing into the green pastures of the comics field?. Were any of them ever prosecuted by the Society for the Suppression of Vice?

Several years ago NATIONAL COMICS PUBLICATIONS, Inc. was assailed by Hearst columnist George E. Sokolsky for having published a propoganda comic strip, "Johnny Everyman", with the co-operation of Pearl Buck and The East-West Association. Sokolsky charged a communistic taint was involved.

I thought you might be interested in having these questions raised by an ex-member of the inner comics fold. What happens to God-like SUPERMAN is no longer a matter of concern to me, since the publishers of SUPERMAN have maneuvered me to a point where I am destitute and they continue making enormous profits from my creation. Any day I expect to be extradited and prosecuted for non-support of my child due to lack of funds.

SUPERMAN, mighty champion of the downtrodden and oppressed, makes fat profits for his selfish, greedy owners while his creator is faced with poverty.

Whenever you see SUPERMAN the symbol of glorious justice, whether in comic books newspaper comic strips, TV, radio, movies, or commercial novelties, think of me, his destitute creator.

Sincerely,

Jerry Siegel

HOME ADDRESSES:
J. S. Liebowitz, 1 Cow Lane, Great Neck, N.Y.
Harry Donenfeld, The Beresford Apartments, 211 Central Park West, N.Y., N.Y.
Paul Sampliner, Hampshire House, 150 Central Park South, N.Y., N.Y.

*Figure 6. Jerry Siegel's letter to J. Edgar Hoover regarding comics.*

activity. While governmental rejection and dismissal of Siegel's frustration was then normal (and remains normal today), Siegel's indictment of the *publishers* as the guilty party, rather than authors or illustrators, is telling of an important shift in the way that mass media was utilized to spread information and alter public perception.

Denouncing comics, representative of youth culture, as filth characterizes youth culture as a whole as morally corrupt. This was particularly ironic, given the evolution of American superhero comics in the so-called "Silver Age." At this time, as Matt Bryant Cheney notes, "comics [began to] find moral and cultural capital simultaneously" (47), participating in larger cultural discussions about Civil Rights, representation, and addressing more banal injustices like segregation and unfair housing practices. As Cheney explains, heroes underwent "a process of attunement to the ills of society far beyond that of super-villains and interstellar conflict" (47). The demonization of comics was all too simple to manufacture; critics like Sterling North, John Mason Brown, and Fredric Wertham had pre-existing scapegoats for social paranoia in the image of the money-hungry Jew. Aligning this pre-War stereotype with the mostly-Jewish (and now somewhat affluent) comics creators was effortless. Such misdirection also masked the fact that publishers and advertisers had been working tandem to craft this thing called "youth culture" since the 1930s and with enhanced fervor in the 1940s allowed bastions of moral and cultural conservation to shift blame to the individuals who supposedly had "needed" a culture specifically for them: the teenagers themselves. Meanwhile the publishers, at whose behest such works had been created, escaped public ire and could be repositioned as guardians of taste and morality. Thus began the widening gyre of teenage alienation from adult onlookers, a differentiation between generations that was

summarized as a lack of understanding, now shifted from the sprawling texts of psychiatrists and sociologists to the tabloids at newsstands. As the artifacts of rising "youth culture" gained popularity amongst adolescent readers, they came increasingly under fire by paranoid adult guardians. Increasing alienation of adolescents from their parents would become the theme of the decade as the 1940s gave way to the 1950s, and a landmark piece of literature--J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)--would prove a catalyst to the solidification of the "alienated youth" as an icon of American midcentury adolescence. At the same time, the forms of masculinity that adolescents of the 1940s consumed and reproduced would evolve into a new form of masculinity thrust upon teenage boys of the next generation. This form of manhood, as we shall see, was inflected with the terminology of action and activity, rather than passivity, in ways that reinforced the concept of adolescence as the time in which the teen "made himself" into a man.

December 5, 1951

Mr. Jerry Siegel
50 Knightsbridge Road
Great Neck, Long Island, New York

Dear Mr. Siegel:

I have read with interest your recent letter, which was received at this Bureau on November 20, 1951, and I appreciate your letting me have your observations in connection with the matters you discuss.

In view of your expressed interest, I am enclosing some material which reflects my own views regarding the relation of unrestrained "crime comics" and the alarming juvenile delinquency rate with which the nation is faced.

Sincerely yours,

John Edgar Hoover
Director

Enclosure
Juvenile Delinquency
cc- New York, with copy of incoming.
ATTENTION SAC: Correspondent is not readily identifiable in Bufiles.

NOTE: Correspondent could not be identified through a check of the Bureau library or Bufiles. He may be identical with one Jerry Siegel, who was Treasurer of the Theatre Arts Committee in April, 1947, at which time Gale Sondergaard, Alex Ratoff, and others were mentioned in connection with Communist Activities in New York. (62-83009-2) One Jerry Siegel is mentioned in the San Francisco Crime Survey of 1948 as being formerly in the Ziegfield Follies in New York. Nothing derogatory concerning this individual located (62-75147-47-88, page 121.) One Jerry Siegel, 1176 58th Street, Brooklyn, New York, urged Senator Ives to vote against ratification of Clark to the Supreme Court in a letter dated October 16, 1949 (100-3-83-328).

*Figure 7. Hoover's (likely form) response with Siegel's attached Bufiles report.*

# CHAPTER 4. THE LAST AND BEST OF THE PETER PANS: *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* AND THE CREATION OF THE MIDCENTURY ADOLESCENT

"It's immaterial to me," she said. "Hey—how old are you, anyhow?"

That annoyed me, for some reason. "Oh, Christ. Don't spoil it," I said. "I'm twelve, for Chrissake. I'm big for my age."

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), 72.

Perhaps no other character has come to represent the iconic American teenager at the middle of the twentieth century like Holden Caulfield, the charismatic protagonist of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). However, as Grace Elizabeth Hale argues, "like Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Catcher* is a radical portrayal of disillusionment with America disguised by its author as a tale of childhood adventure" (1). Few critics of American literature consider *The Catcher in the Rye* to be "young adult" literature. Indeed, as Julie Passanante Elman succinctly argues, "*Catcher* was not written for an adolescent audience" (98). Yet, increasingly, Holden's labyrinthine, profanity-laced tale of three wild days is being included in lists of prototypical young adult literature. After all, *Catcher* was one of the most popular novels among teens in the 1950s and 1960s, and it remains one of the most frequently-assigned books for teenage readers in schools worldwide. Its controversial position at the center of any debate about adolescence during the 1950s makes it the perfect testing ground to understand how some concepts about adolescence that had been treated with disdain would come to be mainstream. Though it offered a very real critique of the world that alienated teenagers and the disaffection that came with middle-class comfort, when it was subsumed into the mass culture that it excoriated *Catcher* lost much of its power. This story of Holden's and *Catcher*'s domestication is also the story of adolescent alienation's commodification. In

this chapter, I will link historical changes in how adolescents were discussed by adults with economic changes that provided significantly different circumstances in which to grow up. These circumstances changed the way adolescents were understood and promoted a different kind of fiction for young adult readers. The problem-novel form that *Catcher* deploys would become the perfect vehicle for addressing new concerns about adolescents, and *The Catcher in the Rye* would become the prototype for the most famous young adult novel of all time, *The Outsiders*.

## 4.1. ECONOMIC CHANGES

As was the case in the 1930s and 1940s, economic concerns were at the core of changing attitudes about adolescent Americans. Whereas the teens of the 1930s and 1940s were given the monumental task of preserving the United States as a nation in the face of catastrophe, teens of the 1950s had no monumental, unifying purpose instilled in them by cultural curators. Part of the reason for this was because economically and politically, the U.S. was doing extremely well. The technological advancements of the Second World War had improved efficiency and production in the fabrication of consumer electronics, automobiles, and food, and so the U.S. quickly became one of the wealthiest and most economically stable nations in the world. Between 1940 and 1960, the U.S. gross national product rose from around $200 billion to $500 billion. Wages also rose steadily despite a decline in the number of manufacturing jobs. This was due, in part, to the emergence of new industries, including the management and service industries, as well as government-funded college educations for returning servicemen. More Americans held white-collar jobs than ever before, and more Americans had more disposable income than ever before. A housing boom followed, creating more production jobs, as

prefabricated home sellers produced hundreds of thousands of homes to meet the demands of newly-expanding metropolitan areas and suburbs. Infill and expansion in the U.S. continued almost unabated well into the 1960s, spurred on by the government's single largest public works bill, the Highways Act of 1956, which connected America's burgeoning cities with their newly-built suburbs.

Unlike their parents and grandparents, teenagers coming of age in the 1950s and 1960s enjoyed unprecedented wealth and leisure time. In addition, a population explosion during this time, lovingly called the "Baby Boom," unbalanced the ratio of adults to kids. More than 65 million children were born in the U.S. between 1944 and 1961. The U.S. in 1965 would be, without a doubt, a teenage nation; anticipating this (and also responding to current concerns about adolescents) psychologists and sociologists began to study adolescent behaviors in an attempt to better guide these new citizens as they had guided their predecessors.

Unfortunately, the late 1940s and early 1950s were characterized by a mixture of hysteria about delinquency should adolescents be undisciplined and early discoveries that adolescents required some form of direction to self-actualize. Contributors to the hysteria were commentators like writer Sterling North, who commented in the May 8, 1940 edition of the *Chicago Daily News* that comic books were "guilty of a cultural slaughter of the innocents" (Thompson 1), John Mason Brown, who coined the term "marijuana of the nursery" in a radio broadcast in 1948, and forensic psychiatrist Fredric Wertham, who likened the struggle in a child's mind on comics to "a conflict between super-ego and sub-machine gun" (Wertham "The Comics" 6). In 1948, Wertham received and reproduced a "good letter" from a concerned mother who wondered "if we cannot stop

the wicked men who are poisoning our childen's minds, what chance is there for mankind to survive longer than one generation, or half of one?" (For Wertham and his followers, mass media was no less a terror than "an invasion of the enemy in war time, with as far reaching consequences as the atom bomb" (Gilbert 105). Wertham contended that "the increase of violence in juvenile delinquency has gone hand in hand with the increase in the distribution of comic books" (4). It is strange that Wertham did not condemn other major mass media outlets, such as his beloved *Saturday Review of Literature*, for publishing tripe such as his ("experts are not needed, only common sense," 5), but instead took on the billion-dollar industry of comic books. In 1950, publishing changes would make the paperback novel the new "bane of the bassinet," as paperbacks became cheaper to manufacture than magazines.

As these hysteria-driving forces wooed parents into believing that mass media creators had nothing but ill will for their children, developmental psychologists like Erik Erikson, Julian B. Rotter, Alain Bandura, and a host of others flooded magazines for parents and scientific publications with theories about adolescent behavior. These theories, taking a cue from the progenitor of behavioral and developmental psychology, B.F. Skinner, did not often ask adolescents for input but rather measured observed behaviors. Though many different versions of theories abounded, in general it was agreed that adolescents required a give-and-take between adolescent subject and their immediate community. Erikson characterized this period as the stage of "identity vs. role confusion," in which the adolescent must be allowed to explore their own identity within certain boundaries; too much parental pressure to conform may lead to identity confusion and a lack of growth, characterized by unnecessarily prolonged adolescence (87).

Bandura and Rotter suggested independently that teens learn social actions from one another, whether because of behavioral reinforcement (Bandura) or in order to provoke the desired response (Rotter). Edgar Z. Friedenberg would argue in *The Vanishing Adolescent* (1959) that teens needed conflict in order to differentiate themselves, and that such rebellion was not delinquency but a necessary method of growth; a year later, Paul Goodman would argue in *Growing Up Absurd* (1960) that much of the reason for delinquency was due to the scarcity of roles for adolescents to fill. In some form or another, the expert consensus echoed that of nearly half a century earlier: teen life was a struggling life, a constant battle between self and society, delinquency and conformity, childhood and adulthood.

Even as Wertham's hysteria enjoyed the spotlight in the nation's battle against comic books, at the same time teen rebellion became encouraged as the new normal. As Bradford W. Wright explains, the "intellectuals and social scientists […] regarded teenage rebellion as a natural and functional process in adolescent development" (200). These two drives initially seem to contradict one another: to prevent the possibility of delinquency by snuffing out all instigators of it (real or perceived) on the one hand, and on the other to facilitate rebellion and delinquency to avoid homogenizing mass culture. Ultimately, however, they hint at the same final concept: carefully-bounded rebellion, or rebellion that is at once satisfying and "real" but not actually dangerous for either the teens who participate in it or the culture that allows it. Put another way, media that would appeal to teenagers had to include some form of rebellion that could be regarded as real or meaningful without actually being rebellious at all. Julie Passanante Elman articulates the seeming paradox nicely:

> YA literature discursively produces an imagined teenager, constituted at the nexus of publishing market demand, adults' nostalgia about their own teen experiences, and cultural hopes and expectations of what a 'healthy' reading experience might produce in teen readers and proto-citizens. Thus, disciplinarity is inherent in the very form, function, and category of fiction for children and so-called young adults. This process of 'securing the child' also secures 'the adult,' discursively constituting adults as emotionally managed, empathic, and coherent subjects in opposition to emotionally volatile and developing teen readers and protagonists. (98)

By creating a safe space in which teens could exercise certain rebellious attitudes, mass media offered a panacea for both alienated adolescents and their fearful parents. By containing the fallout of teenage angst to the realm of fiction, whether film, literature, comic, or otherwise, cultural creators ensured that teens could undertake the processes of self-actualization without endangering a nation that was enjoying the heights of prosperity. But how does *The Catcher in the Rye* encapsulate this desire?

Much of *Catcher*'s success with affluent white teens comes from its presentation of a teen who is in the midst of a relatable situation. Though Holden himself is often a repugnant character, that outer shell of disaffection hides a deep longing for connection. By his own admission, Holden's main fault is that he cares too much. Here, then, "critics and reviewers found a character acutely sensitive to the conformity and spiritual numbness that modern life generates in the world imagined in the novel" (1). Relatable circumstances, coupled with an internalized focus on the worldview of the protagonist, and a plot driven by identifying and seeking resolution to their problems is the so-called

"problem novel" formula that would come to dominate young adult literature. The problem novel is a progeny of an earlier novel tradition, the social novel, in which the protagonist is aware of a social problem that is dramatized through the fictional account. The major difference between teen problem novels and their older ancestors is the age of the protagonist, a feature which limits the narration not only in terms of scope and complexity, but also in terms of viable responses to the problems themselves. In this way, the problem novel formula especially appealed to teens who felt caged by their social setting; given a novel that dramatizes teens finding the freedom to change their lives in the midst of social control could be liberating.

Though teen readers of *Catcher* could not themselves openly rebel against the pressures of conformity and adult control, through fiction they could experience lawlessness and profligacy. The safe confines of fiction—including in music and film, as well as written fiction—offered the same panacea to middle-class boredom and alienation. As Grace Elizabeth Hale argues, all of these media sources shared "an oppositional stance toward conventions and norms imagined as central to American life" (1), and much of the time they spanned class difference in meaningful ways. Hale argues that "the very idea of white middle-class adolescent alienation became increasingly powerful because older observers like journalists and white middle-class adolescent fans themselves connected their rebellion to the oppositional positions of other groups" (2), including bohemian artists, urban and delinquent youth, and those from historically "outsider" positions in the U.S., such as African Americans. As these groups unsettled social norms through countercultural action, non-outsider teens could vicariously get a taste of the rebel life. It is unsurprising that forms many forms popular amongst white

teens, such as rock and roll music, shared their roots with African musical traditions. White teens increasingly sought forms that gave voice to raw emotion, standing defiantly in contrast with the highly-polished arrangements that dominated their parents' musical and literary tastes. Empowered with leisure time and leisure money, teenagers, for perhaps the first time in American history, could shape cultural tastes to their liking. As Hale writes,

> For teenagers and college students, mass culture was not just a problem, as many intellectuals argued in the mid-twentieth century. It was a solution. It was not just the space of a conformity that killed American individualism. It was a space of resistance. It was not just the household of the organization man. It was the home of the rebel. Most importantly, it gave white teenagers a window, however smudged, on black cultural expression. (4)

Hale is, I think, too lenient with the teens who found meaning in Holden's expression. She concludes by saying that while "Holden Caulfield may not have had the answers, but he suggested how some middle-class white kids could start asking the questions" (4). I am not as optimistic. Indeed, with history as our backdrop, it does not seem as though those people who devoured *The Catcher in the Rye* during its meteoric rise to popularity in the 1950s learned many lessons about sacrifice and changing the status quo. Rather, it seems that as affluent white teens feasted on the commodified expressions of anxiety, alienation, and disaffection from black America, few if any of them deigned to leave behind the comforts of their home lives. While they may have enjoyed reading about rebellion, but they did not really want to give up the comforts of

their lives, and they certainly did not go on to question the ways in which society doled out privilege unequally.

This lesson is one to remember, certainly. When cultural critics like Friedenberg suggest that parents facilitate rebellion "by respecting assertions of adolescent identity and granting the cultural means for discovering themselves as individuals" (Wright 200), he does not mean to give teenagers *carte blanche* to rewrite American society. Rather, Friedenberg and other thinkers ask parents to curate opportunities for their cherished children to misbehave in functional, developmentally-oriented ways. In Friedenberg's conceptualization of the parenting world, parents are master schemers who offer their children the perfect opportunities to act out and learn for themselves the correct lessons. The parents, having expected this all along, find that their rebellious teens have learned the value of the lessons they meant to instill through carefully-crafted situations designed to engender particular forms of rebellion. Everyone laughs. Dad passes out more apple pie.

This fictional scenario seems far-fetched beyond the realm of *TV Land*. But as Julie Passanante Elman reminds us, this is precisely what problem novels do: "by detailing the problems faced by teen protagonists, problem novels also conjure impressionable teen readers to regulate 'how their readers will think and act' after completing the books" (99). When the list of acceptable problems is limited only to certain, socially-accepted problems, the solutions to which come from a curated table of socially-correct responses, then the actual possibility of meaningful rebellion is nil. By carefully controlling what situations are valid problems, who experiences them, and how they may be solved, curators of teen culture are able to manipulate and normalize certain

experiences while rendering others too far-fetched even for lurid fiction. This is the slow process of domestication to which the problem novel was subjected. *Catcher*, however, is an early prototype of this form, not yet didactic and certainly not crafted to appeal to teenagers by giving them a false opportunity for rebellion. Instead, Salinger's deployment of "teenage-esque" language seems deliberately ambivalent, though, as we shall see, whether or not its ambiguity succeeds is still unsettled.

## 4.2. VOICE AND AUTHENTICITY

Throughout his works, J.D. Salinger expresses suspicion about the value of social life, given the tension that often arises between social expectation and personal expression. Whether in early short stories about the triviality of upper-class social norms or in his Glass family books, Salinger has always been interested in the ways that societal expectations exert unbearable force upon people who have to act within their confines. Specifically, Salinger is often interested in the ways that renown, prejudice, and legacy can modulate how a person is perceived by the society in which they must function. These forces are felt especially by the outsider figures that are prominent in Salinger's fiction. *The Catcher in the Rye* is not especially unique in Salinger's body of works because of this proclivity--certainly, the Glass family sequence is entirely focused on a family of quirky outsiders. Yet, *Catcher* is the only work of Salinger's that employs such an obviously stylized form of language in service of interrogating the tension between expectation and desire. Though the language here is read as "adolescent" in tone, I want to suggest that instead it is a stylized form of rebellion that hinges less on age and more on class and avoidance strategies.

The defining characteristic of *The Catcher in the Rye* is, of course, how Holden uses language. Largely on the basis of its register, *The Catcher in the Rye* has gained notoriety as a precursor to what would within a decade be called "young adult literature," laying down in prose many of the themes and concepts that would define what we now recognize as literature written primarily for consumption by teen readers. For example, Eric Tribunella contends that *The Catcher in the Rye* "predicted the birth of the young adult novel a decade later" (Tribunella 69), predicated mostly on its unflinchingly critical, profoundly interior main character's "authentic" language and teenage demeanor. Sara K. Hertz and Donald R. Gallo, in their landmark book for secondary school teachers looking to pair classic texts about adolescence with more contemporary fare, identify *Catcher* as an accessible, authentic treatise on teenage alienation, despite openly acknowledging that the book's intended audience is unclear (11). Even critics of American literature more broadly construed have fallen into line with *Catcher*'s repositioning as a harbinger of young adult books to come. Sarah Graham argues in the introduction to her reader's guide to the novel, *J.D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye* (2007), that *Catcher* "captures the unease of American society in the 1950s and articulates the emerging phenomenon of adolescent identity" (8). All of these studies presume *Catcher*'s emblematic representation of adolescent alienation to be descriptive of an entire class of people, rather than symptomatic of a peculiar, openly troubled individual. Otherwise, how could *Catcher* function as a model for what would become commodified as "young adult literature," a category of fiction writing defined precisely by its ability to speak in the voice of its intended audience? Indeed, as I argue above, *Catcher* does not seem to employ adolescent-sounding language for the purposes of presenting teen readers with an

attractive, relatable, real voice; rather, I suspect that Holden's language is part of a larger project in the novel to critique methods of evaluation and assumption that govern social interaction. This critique operates precisely because of the adult assumption that adolescent subjectivity is inherently limited and insufficient, that its speech is defined by circumlocution and vulgarity, and that ultimately any speech act by an adolescent is dubious in nature. But if the novel at once affirms as well as critiques audience assumptions about its protagonist's speech, then for whom was the novel written? Who does it privilege and who does it marginalize in the exchange?

The question of who the intended audience is for *The Catcher in the Rye* has been important to reviewers and critics alike since the book's release in July of 1951. Though the novel was ostensibly written for adult consumption, nevertheless Harcourt Brace preemptively refused production on account of the protagonist's coarse language, which editors feared would ruin their school publishing division thanks to angry parents (Menand 1). This business decision reflects the volatility of fiction produced for children, which was at the mercy of both youthful and adult tastes and proclivities in the market. At the same time, Harcourt Brace's refusal to publish the novel is suggestive of its murky position as crossover fiction, or a book that will appeal to different age demographics for different reasons.

After publication, critics disagreed as to whether Holden's voice was meant to reflect real teen speech or a stylized version of it. In the original *Time* magazine review of the book (July 16, 1951), the reviewer notes explicitly that Salinger's depiction of adolescence is rendered from the outside, not as an expression of adolescence: "For U.S. readers, the prize catch in *The Catcher in the Rye* may well be novelist Salinger himself.

He can understand an adolescent mind without displaying one" (98). Yet on the same day, *The New Republic*'s Anne L. Goodman, citing Holden's characteristically overindulgent style, complained that "in the course of 277 pages the reader wearies of this kind of explicitness, repetition and adolescence, exactly as one would weary of Holden himself" (20). The positive review highlights the ability of the author to describe a subjectivity that is often considered inscrutable by adults; the negative review, on the other hand, takes Salinger to task for "obsessing" about youthfulness and chides his adolescent prose (20). These concerns are echoed throughout *Catcher*'s reviews: Nash K. Burger, writing for the *New York Times*, stresses that *Catcher* shows "adolescence speaking for itself" (July 16, 1951), while Harold L. Roth, writing for the *Library Journal*, argued that *Catcher* was strictly adult reading (July 1951). Donald P. Costello would, at one point, call Salinger's style "an authentic artistic rendering of a type of informal, colloquial, teenage American spoken speech" specific to the time and place (181), while Ernest Jones writes for *The Nation* that "it is of little importance that the alienation, the hatreds, and the disgust are those of a sixteen-year-old. Any reader, sharing or remembering something like them, will agree with the conclusion to be drawn from this unhappy odyssey" (July 16, 1951: 176). Though critics could not agree about the authenticity of Holden's adolescent voice, most agreed that adolescent readers would invariably recognize elements of their own experiences in the depiction as it was written. There is, however, a small but important distinction in these two associations: the former identifies with the speaker as a member of the group being represented, while the latter identifies common experiences between groups. Over time, the latter approach has faded

in young adult literature, giving way to "authentic" teen voices speaking *for* teens, not *about* their experiences.

Modern young-adult literature switches from *speaking about* to *speaking for* through several stylistic approaches. The most prominent of these is simply the point-of-view that is utilized. In children's fiction, the third-person is most common point of view; in young adult fiction, the first-person is the most frequently utilized point of view. This is not a new development; in 1982, Elizabeth Shuhmann identified first-person address given from a young adult persona as the "preferred mode" of young adult literature (Schuhmann 41). Despite Schuhmann's call for more third-person address in young adult fiction, the first-person remains so popular throughout the decades that Hertz and Gallo identify it as one of the best indicators that a book will be accessible to adolescent readers (10). Beyond first-person address, Hertz and Gallo add that "the language [of the young adult novel] is typical of contemporary teenagers, and the vocabulary, unlike that of adult classics, is manageable by readers of average ability" (10). Even as the focalization and language ensure that readers will code Holden as immature, *Catcher* employs both of these tactics to also depict Holden as an outsider in the text, significantly different from the people with whom he interacts. We must keep in mind that, for contemporary scholars like Hertz and Gallo, most evidential young adult fiction conflates these two notions: that the adolescent is always-already alienated, and that their language is an external indication of internal difference. However, I suggest that *Catcher* does not ask us to conflate these two characteristics under the umbrella designation that Holden is a teenager (and therefore misunderstood and alienated). Rather, if we read *Catcher* as commenting on society using the teenage viewpoint as a vehicle of critique, rather than as

an attempt at mimesis, then the two characteristics can be separated. Thus, Holden *is* alienated; he is *also* a teenager; he *also* has a terrible vocabulary and often resorts to vulgarity. Holden still exhibits the same tendencies, but they are not all from the same source, his age.

This is an important nuance to make for what it can tell us about the eventual conflation of these categories into the single signifier "teenager." Language is indeed an important indicator of the intended audience of a book, and especially so when teen readers are involved. Claims to the legitimacy or authenticity of the speaker's identity—as a teenager, as a person of color, as a certain gender, and so on—bear ethical weight in addition to artistic. Here, I think it is important to be very clear: though the term "authentic" is employed to describe the narrative voice that is most prevalent in modern young adult literature, it is widely understood that such authenticity is inherently ironic--that is, it is assumed authenticity, not an actual teenage voice. Mike Cadden (2000) explains that "novels constructed by adults to *simulate* an *authentic adolescent's voice* are inherently ironic because the so-called adolescent voice is never--and can never be--truly authentic" (146, emphasis added). Thus, he terms the pseudo-young-person's address "ironic authenticity," an "artful depiction of artlessness" which simultaneously captures the "all-too-reliable young adult's consciousness" as well as "limited awareness of the world that the novelist knows to be incomplete and insufficient" (146).

What is important for Cadden, who is most eminently concerned with power dynamics and the ethics of (mis)representation that accompany ironic authenticity, is that the novelist offer "horizontal power relations between the major characters within the text so that the young adult reader has the power to see the opposing ideologies at play"

(146). Doing so avoids the ethical problem of delivering a didactic, obviously "correct" ideological position to the reader by abusing their implicit trust in the narrator who resembles them. For Cadden, offering alternative ideological positions to bloom and compete within the young adult novel—that is, dialogism—"enables the reader to consider the rightness of positions based on the specific details of the narrative" (147). Put another way, writing in a narrative mode that is openly limited creates an ethical quandary for the author: whether to depict the limits of that character's observation or not. In age-based literature that is primarily written by adults for nonadults, this ethical problem becomes more pronounced because of the inherently uneven power dynamics at play between adults and children. As Cadden writes, "there are ethical implications for how authors of young adult fiction help their young audiences select, appropriate, and assimilate" the discourses and ideologies that authors present (147). In the case of *The Catcher in the Rye*, these discourses centered on broad representations of teenagers as anxious, alienated, precariously-situated outsiders.

On one hand, *Catcher* qualifies as young adult literature based on Cadden's system because it is overtly concerned with dialogic reading. Much of what Holden says is meant to be purposefully confusing and often contradictory. However, I want to suggest that the relationship between Holden's iconic voice and and the "iconic adolescent voice" is not so clear. Holden is *not* speaking in the "iconic adolescent voice," but rather in a *stylized version* of it that is designed to cater to readerly expectations. Really, there is nothing meaningfully identifiable as "teenage" about Caulfield's narrative voice. The slang is somewhat authentic, as Donald P. Costello writes (13). However, as Paul Kussmaul notes in his discussion of translating *Catcher*, Holden's slang is "no mere

imitation of real-life slang," but rather a carefully-selected melange of crudisms to make him seem older (123). For example, Holden uses just one phrase for sex ("giving her the time") and one phrase for kissing ("necking"), but eight adjectives to imply negativity: lousy, crumby, pretty, terrific, quite, old, goddam, and stupid (123). Though Costello contends that Holden's language is typical of a Northeastern American prep-school boy's at midcentury, he also notes that "the special quality of [his] language comes from its triteness, its lack of distinctive qualities" (14). Both Kussmaul and Costello agree that the strong language, while overt, is nevertheless often devoid of real meaning (Kussmaul 124; Costello 15-16), indicating that while Holden says quite a lot, everything he says is indeterminate.

While on the one hand Holden's indeterminate language reflects Holden's admittedly "lousy vocabulary," which relies on adjectival emphasis rather than specificity, it also does not necessarily replicate the knowing humor of slang. Put another way, slang is often incredibly *determinate*, with specific phrases being used for specific purposes. Slang, and particularly juvenile slang, is not merely a practice in vulgarity, peppering one's phrasing with "asses" and "sonuvabitches" as Holden often does (Costello 16). Rather, slang is a form of knowingly polysemic language, in which statements have both face-value significance as well as hidden significance that only makes sense amongst vernacular practitioners. Looking at slang-laden publications of either Salinger's or Holden's youth in the 1940s and 1950s, such as *Yank* magazine, it is clear that Holden only rarely doubles his meaning, and generally in obvious rather than subversive ways. Where "jive kids" of the time had coded language for everything from good food (lush mush) to a sexually-active boy (wolf on a scooter) to the teacher's pet

(gone Quisling) (*Yank* April 6, 1945, p. 18), Holden never uses language that is so deeply coded that nobody can understand it. Rather, he uses slang in nondescript ways that seem distinct, but in actuality are not.

The character of Holden's language is important to note specifically as it sheds light on what is assumed about the adolescent subjects that readers thought it described so well. Alan Nadel describes Holden's style as "obsessively proscriptive," in that Holden "not only explains his world but also justifies his explanations by locating them in the context of governing rules, rendering his speech not only compulsively explanatory but also authoritarian" (351-2). For Nadel, this reveals a dual consciousness in Holden, made up of one Holden who wants to control his world and one who wants to be completely subordinated to it (353). Here, Nadel reads evidence of Cold War conformism and McCarthyist testimonial. At the same time, however, we must not forget that the novel itself takes the form of a response to an unseen interrogator. Holden begins by saying, "If *you* really want to hear about it, the first thing *you*'ll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if *you* want to know the truth" (1, emphasis added). Two things are noteworthy here: first, that Holden positions the impetus to speak on the listener; if *you* really want to know (because, presumably, you asked). The speech is hesitant even if confident, evidenced by the adverb "really," which here is used to place emphasis on the listener's role. At the same time, "really" also functions as a verification adverb, that the events "really" happened, as opposed to fictionally. However, the over-insistence on things "really" occurring throughout the text works against verifiability, making Holden's

statements sound more like opinions than facts. The effect is labyrinthine speech: by the end of the passage, the reader does not remember who initiated the conversation or why it was initiated, but rather focuses on Holden's final statement (usually a repeated belief amplified by "really").

The second and more important feature of this opening rant is the acknowledgement of Freudian psychoanalytical approaches to understanding trauma. Remember that Holden writes retrospectively after seeking medical help for his issues, noting that "this one psychoanalyst guy they have here keeps asking me if I'm going to apply myself when I go back to school" (213). This explicitly acknowledges the widely-held assumptions that juvenile delinquency is a problem rooted in an unsatisfactory upbringing. Holden acknowledges the urge, then ignores it: "I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything" (1). As Nadel suggests, this is an instance of Holden noting the governing rules of the exchange, then exerting authority over the exchange by shifting to a new topic. While this tacit confirmation of rules while simultaneously subverting their purpose can be read as a response to McCarthy-era self-incrimination interviews, I think the role Holden's speech plays in the narrative is much simpler. Holden mocks the assumptions that teen speakers are inherently untrustworthy.

Foregrounding "what really happened," "the truth," honesty, admitting to hard truths, and getting worked up about phoniness are all rhetorical devices that Holden employs in a dialogic manner. On the surface, these function as assurances to the reader that Holden is being honest. However, as I note above, the impetus is always put on the listener's desire for the truth, rather than entertainment. Thus, each assurance is also a subtle clue to be suspicious. These combine with the contents of Holden's narrative to

build a case against his reliability: he lies, he "shoots the old bull," he creates fake names and identities, he operates under false pretenses, and he exaggerates everything he reports. As I have noted above, each appeal to truth, then, casts a glance to the side: do they *really* believe this stuff? And yet, much of the reason that this tactic works is because it preys upon the assumptions that teens cannot be trusted to correctly report the truth, or to view situations as neutral. However, Holden enables such readings by being carefully indeterminate with his language.

As Costello indicates, the most common of these polysemic utterances is when Holden discusses "shooting the crap" as both an act of lying and of idle chatting (17). In addition with the repeated phrase "if you want to know the truth," which again simultaneously invokes veracity and prevarication (17), these forms of slang empower Holden with the ability to direct meaning by making it questionable for the reader. In general, Holden's language is not so deeply vernacularized to teenage as to be incomprehensible to most readers. For the most part, this stylistic decision would be a practical one (so all readers can make sense of the narrative). At the same time, however, Holden's simultaneously typical and idiosyncratic deployment of slang reveals, as Costello writes, that Holden is "a sensitive youth" who "reveals his age" by avoiding "the most strongly forbidden terms" (14-15). Clearly Holden is meant to be somewhat recognizably typical, but also so unique in his use of a typical form of language as to be special.

Authenticity in this respect is not designed, then, to replicate a limited consciousness. Holden is too self-aware of the limits of his vocabulary and the effects of those limits. Rather, Holden *knowingly* and *repeatedly* implements linguistic tactics that

reinforce truthfulness, honesty, significance, and openness. Repeatedly insisting on the truth of his words has the dual effect of both enticing the reader to listen and believe but also to maintain a healthy suspicion about what he has said; to misuse Shakespeare, the Caulfield doth protest too much. That tactic introduces viable dialogism into the novel: readers can safely think Holden tells the truth, always lies, or tells truthful statements with fabricated flourishes of varying size, and each of those interpretations is supported. It should be noted, however, that though Holden utilizes a particular vernacular form used by a specific demographic group, the fact remains that such indeterminacy of validity is not itself necessarily a feature of adolescence or young adult fiction. Rather, it is a relatively normative difficulty encountered when a reader meets an unreliable narrator.

Moreover, the other iconic feature that is often classified as necessarily "young adult" in form, first-person address, is not unique in literature to fiction for adolescents; it is, however, an important development in the novel that is often used to affirm individual growth and change.[41] Though growth and change are often associated with youth, certainly youth is not the only time in which people change. First-person address and the interiority it grants to a character are features of many forms of fiction from many periods and literary traditions. Though Hertz and Gallo and others may want to claim the first-person narrator as inherently more "adolescent" than other forms, I would argue that this comes from a misunderstanding that most teen readers are so-called "reluctant readers." First-person address ostensibly lures reluctant readers in by offering "relatability," by which the reader can identify with the protagonist. But, as Maria Nikolajeva contends,

[41] For Bakhtinian critics, for example, first-person narrative enforces the novel's time-structure by affixing it to a human's lived experience; the book develops as the speaking protagonist does.

focusing too intently upon the "relatability" of a character often promotes uncritical reading practices (Nikolajeva 2000, 185). Indeed, in the case of young adult literature, the intense focus on authenticity and identification have prevented many critics from taking the books seriously. If all they do is pander to an audience, how can they possibly be literary?

And yet, it is this very assumption on which *Catcher*'s linguistic uniqueness promotes a significant critique of cultural assumptions about teens and nonstandard English practices. Holden's language evokes typical teenage lingo and yet is meaningfully distinct; it evokes honesty while maintaining the possibility of lying; it is simultaneously offensive and yet enchanting; and, most meaningfully, it reinforces readerly expectations while also confronting them. When first-person address meets vernacular speech, as it so often does in realist or regionalist literature, the effect on the reader is usually the same: assumptions about those people surface and affect the reading. Think, for example, of the invocation of the Southern black American vernacular used by Ralph Ellison's nameless narrator in *Invisible Man* (1952), who begins by defying readerly assumptions about a Southern black man's voice:

> I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- and I might even be said to possess a mind" (1).

Ellison's novel, as with Salinger's, invokes the storied history of American vernacular writing and the complex relationship it shares with American regionalism, readerly regard, and cultural associations. For Ellison, the intellectual prose works to make the

narrator's race yet more invisible to the reading eye; for Salinger, Holden's confrontational language works to make his age yet more obvious to the reader. Holden fits into readerly assumptions about adolescent narcissism, dishonesty, laziness, and disaffection, even though those are character flaws, not adolescent ones.

In my reading, Salinger anticipates readerly assumptions about adolescent subjects and panders to that assumption in order to disguise the deeper critique of his novel: the ways that society predetermines their reactions to a person based on assumptions about that person. Salinger recognizes that teens are not often rendered as believable, and uses this initial doubt as a mechanism to introduce dialogism into the text. However, I do not want to suggest that the intended audience is of consequence here, or, more specifically, that Salinger wrote for teenagers. Rather, the intended audience *does not matter* so long as the *assumption* that a teen voice is inherently less trustworthy is in place. In part, this is because such an assumption relieves the reader of having to be critical of both the object of the protagonist's ire *and* the protagonist himself. If Holden is "just" a teenager, with the limited and ignorant perspective endemic to such a person, readers may feel justified in letting his limits and failures slide from a narrative standpoint. Even though, as Costello maintains, the specific language used is what makes Holden's character operate, the fact that it has been masked as "typical" teenage speech often removes Holden's specific usage of slang and unique approach to truth and lies from the discussion.

We could read Holden's management of the truth in the novel as a subversive act that engenders powerful adolescent rebellion. Certainly, the ways that language evolves over time seems a perennial complaint of the old about the young, and the rapidly-

changing mechanisms of communication that accompany modernism have exacerbated this tension. While we might see rebellious *potential* in Holden's ambivalent linguistic register and the necessarily limited first-person point of view Salinger utilizes, I do not ultimately think these potentialities are fully realized in *The Catcher in the Rye*. The reason, to be blunt, is because I do not trust Holden to have been fully truthful in the telling. And even if he has told the truth and nothing but the truth, then the truth is that Holden is terrible at rebellion.

## 4.3. FLUNKING OUT OF REBELLION SCHOOL

*The Catcher in the Rye* depicts an almost comically perfect opportunity for rebellion: Holden is on the cusp of adulthood, just a semester removed from graduation, and he has flunked out of his third school in a row for failing to apply himself. He is, from a developmental and social standpoint, literally poised on the cusp of adulthood with just a few simple coming-of-age rites to perform before he will be taken seriously as an adult. We quickly learn that Holden is not very good at "applying himself," and this is apparently the core reason he is so bad in school and so woefully unprepared to become an adult. He notes that he has flunked out of Pencey Prep "on account of I was flunking four subjects and not applying myself and all" (4). Pencey "gave me frequent warnings to start applying myself […] but I didn't do it," and so he "got the ax" (4). We quickly learn that he has also "had some difficulty at Whooton School and at Elkton Hills" (11, 13) schools he flunked out of earlier. It is not that Holden is incapable, but rather that he is bored and easily distracted. This comes across in the writing, which jumps from point to point seemingly at random, and also in Holden's brief anecdotes. For example, he loses

the fencing team's equipment on the subway simply because he "had to keep getting up to look at this map so we'd know where to get off" (3) and apparently forgets they exist, or why he is on the subway looking at the map in the first place.

Much of the novel involves situations where Holden should be "applying himself" in one way or another. However, Holden tells a variety of tales about boys who applied themselves, with varying results. All are revolting to Holden. The most benign is Holden's brother D.B., who writes a wonderful short story that Holden loves. When he applies himself and becomes a Hollywood writer, however, he becomes "a prostitute" (2, 80) to the movies. Others who attempt to get ahead in life are phonies, real jerks, or the kind of people who "never give your message to anybody" (149). At worst, they are the bullies and spiteful kind of people who are never punished for their misdeeds. Holden has the unfortunate luck of rooming with one, Ward Stradlater, "the handsomest guy in the Western Hemisphere" (27). Stradlater is athletic, handsome, and applies himself, mostly to girls. He tells Holden to do his homework. Typically, Holden is a doormat. However, when Holden confronts Stradlater about possibly "giving the time" to an old acquaintance of Holden's, Jane Gallagher, Holden decides enough is enough and tries to get in a fight with Stradlater. This does not end well. Holden ends up pinned under Stradlater's knees, calling him a "crumby bastard" over and over (44). When he finally stops muttering and Stradlater lets him up, he goes for a punch and receives a return square in the nose. Bloodied, Holden lies on the floor, calling Stradlater a moron sonuvabitch (45). This tactic seems to work, as Stradlater loses interest and leaves.

While Holden's prize for applying himself to the situation is unpleasant, it is nowhere near as bad as a boy who takes an actual stand for his rights. James Castle, a

former fellow student at Elkton School, calls out another student at Elkton Hills for being conceited. When Castle won't take it back, Holden reports, the boy "and about six other dirty bastards" attack Castle in retribution (170). Holden says "I won't even tell you what they did to him—it's too repulsive," but as a result of the abuse, Castle commits suicide by jumping out of his window (170). The boys are expelled, but "they didn't even go to jail," Holden notes (170). How the bullies react to a challenge is kind of behavior is the form of "applying himself" to which Holden cannot resort. In part this is because he is scrawny, has bad lungs from smoking, and seems too concerned with making up fantasies about fighting to do any real scrapping. But we can also understand Holden's response as a symbolic protest—just not a really *serious* one, more of a passive one. Castle serves as a useful foil to Holden: his dedication to a cause costs him his life. Holden's lack of dedication lets him escape unscathed.

Applying himself also has a sort of double-entendre meaning, hinted at with Stradlater. One can "apply oneself" *to* something, like an ointment, a version of the term that Stradlater boasts to be well-versed in (34). While Holden is obsessed with sex—his former student adviser Carl Luce calls sex questions "typical Caulfield questions" (146)—he is never able to seal the deal. His first act of emancipation, after he gets off the train home, is to call a girl who might spend the night with him. By his own admission, sex is something Holden "just [doesn't] understand" (63). This is in part, he claims, because he tends to "horse around with girls that, deep down, gave [him] a pain in the ass" (63). Nevertheless, he manages to sound suave on the telephone while also managing to ruin his plans entirely. When the girl rightly notes that it he has called her in the wee hours of the morning, she asks if they can meet the next night for cocktails. "I

can't make it tomorrow. Tonight's the only time I can make it" he says instead, "fouling that up" (65) rather than being flexible. Though Holden protests that it is usually the girls who are difficult to deal with, in this situation it is actually him. In this situation Holden is unable to "apply himself" in part because, as he admits, he's not terrifically interested in sex, but also because his personality does not fit the kind of girl he is expected to hook up with. But underneath Holden's protestations there is also a tacit acknowledgment that Holden goes into these relationships already prejudiced: he only dates girls he *already suspects* will be difficult, and then treats them in ways that affirm his assumptions.

This relatively minor failure—after all, he barely knows the girl he calls—marks the beginning of a string of increasingly strange failures. The connecting thread is Holden's assumption that each will end negatively. He tries (and fails) to get a drink at a late-night hotel bar, where he also tries (and fails) to effectively flirt with three tourists. Throughout this exchange, Holden focuses intensely on how out of place they seem (67), how ugly (68), boring (68), obsessed with celebrity (66), and how shallow in conversation they are (68). They are, fortunately, good dancers (68), but this is not enough to redeem them in his mind. After the "three witches at the table" (70) retire for the evening, Holden ends up at another bar, where he successfully purchases alcohol (though, he notes, "if you were only around six years old you could get liquor at Ernie's," 85) and runs into Lillian, an ex-girlfriend of his brother's. There, despite being completed starved of human interaction, he refuses to spend time with Lillian, "strictly phony," and her date, "some Navy officer […] with a poker up his ass" (86). As he leaves, he muses that "people are always ruining things for you," (87) a stark reversal of the desperate longing for connection that inspires each of these situations. Each highlights Holden's

failures for the audience as cowardice, not rebellion. Whatever power he may have accrued in subverting adult authority has been lost because he commits the same fouls as they do when interacting with other people.

Holden's relatively uninteresting sexual romp in the novel concludes with actual economic transactions between him and a prostitute. Following a night of drinking, Holden begins by talking about how he wished he would stand up for himself sometimes, but that underneath it all he is "one of these very yellow guys" (88). In his hotel lobby, he is then bullied by Maurice, an elevator boy, into ordering some time with "Sunny." Holden orders an escort but is unable to follow through with physical intimacy. Though she continually makes moves, including taking off her dress, calling him cute, and sitting on his lap, Holden makes excuse after excuse ("I had an operation on my clavichord" [96]). Rather, he asks if she "would mind very much if [they] don't do it" that night, sitting up and talking instead (96). He pays her, though there is a discrepancy between the advertised cost and what she asks for. This incites an altercation between Holden, Sunny, and Maurice. Sunny and Maurice hound Holden for the remainder of the cash—five dollars, as it turns out—and Holden becomes increasingly hysterical during the confrontation. Eventually, he starts crying and insults Maurice, calling the man "a goddam dirty moron," a "stupid chiseling moron" (103). After this, Maurice punches Holden in the gut and leaves. The physical altercation is not significant in terms of actual damage, but Holden imbues the exchange with lethal importance. After Maurice leaves, Holden puts on a bathrobe and "sort of started pretending [he] had a bullet in [his] guts. Old Maurice had plugged [him]" (103-4).

In this situation, Holden reenacts the lethal slip that cost James Castle his life when Castle stood up to being bullied directly. Castle was beaten by six young men in a shared restroom; Holden was punched once. Castle threw himself out of a window in despair; Holden lights a cigarette and wanders around his hotel room muttering until he falls asleep in the bed. Certainly these two situations are not equivalent, but in an important way: Holden's punishment seems oddly light compared to the context of his harassment, while Castle's stands out as being exceptionally brutal in nature. Castle is a tragic figure; Holden becomes the heroic figure. By resituating his failure as a heroic death, Holden is able to not have to address the underlying issues: that he's going through motions he does not believe in simply because it is what a bored seventeen-year-old is supposed to do, that he has the privilege to simply leave situations that threaten him, or that he is not a rebel by any means, but rather a coward.

## 4.4. MAYBE I'M NOT ALL YELLOW.

If simply refusing to do anything meaningful is rebellion of the highest quality, then Holden Caulfield is the greatest rebel of all time. However, as we can see, most of the reasons Holden never applies himself is to avoid confrontation or disappointment. All of this failure to apply himself reveals a painfully obvious trait about Holden: he is a coward. It is not just that Holden does not physically stand up for himself, a trait that, in 1951, would quickly have been associated with a subordinate masculinity, but also that Holden does not follow through on anything. This manifests in simple requests as well as more complex ones. For example, early in the novel Holden goes to meet with his history

teacher, who admonishes his lackluster essay response to a question for being nothing more than empty jibber-jabber. This is par for the course with most high school essays, but what is interesting is that the question is *optional*. Holden has gone to the trouble of answering a question that was superfluous, but only by giving an empty, meaningless answer. This action reinforces the oversharing tendency of the novel. When Holden wants to say nothing, he says everything, even if what he says is utterly meaningless.

Holden's date with Sally Hayes, the moment at which his cowardice reaches its climax, becomes a disastrous illustration of Holden's inability to function in the world of social interaction, particularly dating norms and courtship rituals. Though he can say the right things at the beginning and knows where to take girls and how to politely request their presence, when it comes to the date itself he breaks apart. Their date goes poorly when Sally meets a man whom Holden assumes to be an old flame. The two engaging in cordial if pretentious conversation over the course of a few minutes is enough to make Holden "sort of hate old Sally by the time we got in the cab" after "about ten hours" of "that Andover bastard" unabashedly "horning in on [his] date" (127-8). This leads him down the inexorable path toward disgust at Sally's good social graces, which Holden reads as phoniness. She moves the date to the ice rink where she can flirtatiously skate while wearing "one of those little skirts that just come down over their butt and all" (129), but Holden is too angry to give it more than passing notice. Rather, he is ready to go on the offensive.

Sally's benign request—whether or not Holden will be trimming the tree with her this Christmas—is the final straw for him. The request itself is normal for courting adolescents at the time; it offers Holden a chance to meet and be vetted by Sally's family.

But instead of reassuring Holden that Sally is interested in him, he retreats from the situation by changing the topic of conversation:

> "Did you ever get fed up?" I said. "I mean did you ever get scared that everything was going to go lousy unless you did something? I mean do you like school and all that stuff? […] Well, *I* hate it [school]. Boy, do I hate it. […] But it isn't just that. It's everything. I hate living in New York and all. Taxicabs, and Madison Avenue buses, with the drivers and all always yelling at you to get out at the rear door, and being introduced to phony guys that call the Lunts angels, and going up and down in elevators when you just want to go outside, and guys fitting your pants all the time at Brooks, and people always—"
>
> "Don't shout, please," old Sally said. (130)

None of the items in this litany of affronts are significant enough issues to drive a person to have a mental breakdown. Rather, these are the annoying and frustrating parts of being a functional person in the modern world that seeks to pigeonhole individuals. Holden also rails against car culture, against cliques, against macho braggadociousness, against prep school culture and having to be fake to survive in a world full of people putting on airs. In short, he complains about having to modulate his personality to fit the demands of others in polite society—all very publicly and drunkenly to his date.

His final suggestion to her, as usual, is to escape everything by running away toward some beautiful, fantastic possible future:

> "Look," I said. "Here's my idea. How would you like to get the hell out of here? Here's my idea. […] What we could do is, tomorrow morning we

> could drive up to Massachusetts and Vermont, and all around there, see. It's beautiful as hell up there. It really is." I was getting excited as hell, the more I thought of it, and I sort of reached over and took old Sally's goddam hand. What a goddam *fool* I was. "No kidding," I said. "I have about a hundred and eighty bucks in the bank. I can take it out when it opens in the morning, and then I could go down and get this guy's car. No kidding. We'll stay in these cabin camps and stuff like that till the dough runs out. Then, when the dough runs out, I could get a job somewhere and we could live somewhere with a brook and all and, later on, we could get married or something. I could chop all our own wood in the wintertime and all. Honest to God, we could have a terrific time! Wuddaya say? C'mon! Wuddaya say? Will you do it with me? Please!" (132)

Sally's response brings Holden crashing back down to earth. "You can't just *do* something like that" (132). She correctly identifies the entire suggestion as fantasy. As his dreams deflate, though, Holden refuses to defend the belief beyond blaming its failure on *Sally* for not believing in it. It is not until the end of the chapter, after much assuring the reader that he has no idea where he got those notions of escape, that he admits that he "*meant* it when [he] asked her" (134, emphasis in original). Holden is unwilling even to commit to escape when he has no willing accomplice. Moreover, he cannot go through with the request because the marriage is still another vestige of the society that Holden loathes. For Holden, it feels as if there is no escape from the world of expectations, in part because there isn't.

Holden's antisociality seems to have been mistaken for active rebelliousness, a desire to fight against injustices that society perpetuates almost by design. However, Holden is not a rebel with a cause; rather, he is a coward who is bored, lonely, and afraid. Very late in the novel, Holden's cherished mentor tells him that "the mark of an immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of a mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one" (188). Someday, Holden will "have to find out where [he] want[s] to go. And then [he'll] have to start going there" (188). In a modern young adult novel where the point of view of adolescent coming-of-age is valorized, this would be the moment of enlightenment, in which Holden finds his cause, changes his life, and becomes a productive adult person. It has all of the features of this hackneyed situation; Antolini reminds Holden that he's "not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior" (189), noting that one day, Holden will learn from these feelings (189). Holden, however, is not the iconic young adult hero. Salinger is not writing a triumphal vision of a loner coming to terms with societal expectation. Holden is as much a perpetrator of social presumption as he is a victim. Implied in Antolini's aphorism is the belief that all people are motivated by something greater than themselves, that they *apply themselves*, tool-like, to a cause. Holden refuses to be implemented, even if the cause is noble.[42]

[42] This entire scene is laden with coded sexual meaning that Holden utterly fails to decode. Indeed, many of Holden's interactions with men in the novel could be viewed as coded discussions of closeted homosexuality and, more problematically, as pederasty. Such a reading would be interesting, but is sadly beyond the scope of this project.

## 4.5. THE LAST AND BEST OF THE PETER PANS.

Holden talks a good game, but thanks to his cowardice and his inability to apply himself to anything—even a cause he believes in—he ultimately renders himself powerless. Holden's dream, which he confides to his kid sister Phoebe, is to become a "catcher in the rye," standing on a cliff at the precipice of adulthood, stopping children who come running foolishly toward it (173). The only thing that Holden idealizes is childhood, and protecting it from the ravages of a modern world that wants to defile it at all turns. His idol throughout the novel is not an adult controller who has exerted influence on him, but rather his dead brother, Allie.

Like the Glass family stories, *The Catcher in the Rye* was originally intended to be part of a larger collection of stories about the Caulfields. Most of these stories are unpublished, held in state at Princeton's Firestone Library until 2050, Salinger's final wish. One thread that connects all the Caulfield stories and the novel is the relationship between the three brothers, whose names may change but who are all in similar positions: D.B., a war hero who becomes a writer, his middle brother Holden, who doesn't know what he wants to do and aimlessly wanders through his young adult years, and his youngest brother Allie, dead from leukemia at the age of eleven. In *Catcher*, Holden expresses his only seemingly real feeling: unbridled rage at the unfairness of the world that took away his little brother. He "broke all the goddam windows" and his hand in the process (39). Across the stories, sometimes Holden and Allie switch positions. This ghost haunts Holden through *Catcher*. He repeatedly comes back to the boy who won't grow up, talking to him, thinking about how he used to laugh and play, mourning over his

funeral, and wishing he were the dead brother instead of the wunderkind (155). Indeed, in one story, "The Last and Best of the Peter Pans," it is *Holden*, not Allie, who is missing.

This connection between never growing up and the impossible child (that is, the boy who *will never* grow up) seems to also be the impetus for Holden's desire to be a catcher. If only he could be there to protect children from flying into the abyss, he thinks, he could be useful. Ultimately, though, he realizes that childhood, like life, is fleeting. The penultimate scene with Phoebe on the merry-go-round in the pouring rain, Holden standing by and watching her spin, reinforces the circularity of coming of age and of life. This scene also echoes the beginning scene: Holden, standing on the boundaries of the play area in bad weather, watching, not taking part. The closing scene is an enormous anticlimax: Holden seems resigned to his fate, wearily giving in to the pressures of society that demand he return to normality. He has returned to life, will be going to school in the fall, and is undergoing therapy (213). But, ever the rebel, Holden fails to even make a meaning out of the life he has just relayed to the reader. In response to queries about what he wants to do, Holden says he doesn't know (213); when asked what he thinks about everything he's just said over the course of some 200 pages, he also says he doesn't know. Perhaps that is Holden's true rebellion. Like a midcentury Bartleby the Scrivener, Holden simply refuses to take part at all.

To speak plainly, *The Catcher in the Rye* was not created as and should not be understood as an "authentic" expression of normative adolescent subjectivity in the United States. Holden does not serve as the voice of teen alienation at midcentury. Rather, Salinger depicts a particular formulation of anxiety, informed in part by his own thoughts on how *individuals*, young and old, participate in and are changed by society.

Put another way, *The Catcher in the Rye* expresses Salinger dissatisfaction with the pressures exerted on the individual's sense of self by the society in which they live. This is not a teen feeling; it is a human feeling. People have to change themselves, become "phonies," in order to participate in society. That this more often describes the anxieties suffered by adolescent subjects who have less power to envision and realize their own approaches to surviving within a social network should be blamed not on a quality inherent to adolescents, but rather on the way that adolescence has been defined through expert discourse. Because experts have imbued adolescence with the psychic baggage of trying to find one's place in the world, finding difficulties in doing so--though they occur across and throughout the lifespan--are understood primarily as *adolescent problems*.

However, hegemonic cultural beliefs about adolescence can also be deployed to produce a critique of those beliefs as well. Utilizing the assumed "voice of adolescence" allows Salinger to provoke questions that are untenable from the unquestioned stability of maturity. For example, through Holden's eyes we see the failures of the adults in his life, whether because they are too complacent in their power over children and teens (as his teachers are), because they are blinded by affection for their young ones (as mothers and fathers are), because they are physically enamored with the forbidden fruit of child bodies (as Antolini is), or because they are too old for their childish things (as D.B., Carl, Sally, and other new adults are). Holden's frequent invocations of being both reliable and unbelievably guard his analyses from being taken too seriously as the indictments of adult failure that they are. After all, Holden is just an angsty teenager.

Salinger's use of an adolescent voice allows him to use Holden as a celebration of rebellion as well, and it is this celebration that I think resounded most with teen readers.

Adults, too concerned with destinations, fail to enjoy the ride; Holden's story is a three-day bender of reveling in failure, something that is inadmissible to adults, who must always be concerned for the preservation of the present and the promise of the future. He breaks down from the crushing weight of that future and is saved by the levity of his sister's enjoyment of simple pleasures. Through careful examination of the record of Holden's development and of the novel's reliance on fantasy rather than realism to craft its tale, we can recognize the limits of the adult life that is preached to Holden as the cure to all his ailments. Being an adult does not stabilize one's role in society; rather, one simply learns to accept and navigate the cruel world of social assumption and prejudice. That it is childhood fantasy that saves him from the real is crucial, and that is the true threat to adult supremacy, not his teenage anxiety.

However, the fact remains that many have read the novel as emblematic of young adulthood. In his first interview, given to students at Windsor High School's *Daily Eagle* newspaper in 1953, Salinger mysteriously suggested that the novel was "sort of autobiographical," explaining that his boyhood "was very much the same as that of the boy in the book" (Crawford 4). That interview has been cited and re-cited as evidence of some underlying autobiographical impulse in the novel, despite its throwaway quality: Salinger was a boy growing up in the 1930s and 1940s in New York, and he attended preparatory schools. Beyond those basic features, most of Salinger's life does not match Holden's. Yet, the interview became a turning point in the celebrated author's life: the rest of decade saw Salinger reach unprecedented heights before utterly disappearing from public view. Salinger famously forbade publishers from depicting his characters on the cover, in order to prevent readers from entering the book with preconceived notions. He

gave fewer and fewer interviews, and became increasingly reclusive even on the streets of his newfound kingdom in Cornish. On the dust jacket of his last short story collection, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters, and Seymour: An Introduction* (1963), Salinger would voice, in his typically direct fashion, that “it is my rather subversive opinion that a writer's feelings of anonymity-obscurity are the second most valuable property on loan to him during his working years." In the same year, Time magazine all but solidified the author’s iconicity as a hermit, devoting the cover and most of the issue to Salinger while profiling him as a quirky recluse, floundering about on a grandiose final trilogy on his Glass family.

Within a decade of its publication, *Catcher* had become the very mass-market effluvium it reviled as contributing to conformity. Teens who felt alienated by their lives could now purchase material goods to give an outlet to their feelings and to solidify their identities. Commodification, or the process by which goods, services, ideas, and identity become objects of trade, had neutralized *Catcher*’s biting commentary simply by making it popular. The fact that *Catcher* presented a teen-sounding voice was a great boon; that it focused on seemingly easily solvable problems, all the better; that its protagonist did not do anything horrible during his “rebellion,” perfect. All of the nuance of Holden’s relationship with reality, of his ambiguous over-explanation of his experiences, of his haunting loneliness and disturbing misanthropy, and of his coming-of-age were smoothed over and rendered safe for consumption when the adult establishment declared *Catcher* to be an acceptable book. Even as they maintained a glimmer of the forbidden in frequently challenging the (actually benign) profanity and sexual content, the book’s larger critique of the people within the society who allowed themselves to be controlled was quietly

ignored. We could compare its success with the success of another book that is eerily similar, Charles Webb's *The Graduate* (1963), the novel basis for the immensely popular 1967 film of the same name. In *The Graduate*, protagonist Benjamin Braddock is in the gap year between graduation and finding employment. Rather than participate in the utterly fake upper-class world of privilege his parents enjoy, Benjamin instead rebels by taking part in many of the same things Holden does, albeit now with the license of being an adult: he goes on an aimless road trip to be with "the real people of this world" (44) and avoid having to pick a graduate school (42), starts an affair with Mrs. Robinson (70), is pressured into dating Mrs. Robinson's daughter, Elaine (111), falls in love with her (134), follows her to Berkeley (137), and pressures her to marry him (173). The book closes as Benjamin interrupts her marriage ceremony to Carl Smith and the two run away together on a bus (222-226). In contrast to *Catcher*, Benjamin Braddock is a man of few words and much action. Benjamin makes a seemingly better rebel than Holden, to be sure. But nevertheless, neither man upsets the social order in significant or dangerous ways that could threaten American life as they know it; rather, they undertake personal rebellions, domesticated, principled anarchy, in search of personal meaning, not social change. Holden and Benjamin both ultimately reify the society they rebel against: Holden returns home and tries to get better, while Benjamin affirms the social power of marriage. Their rebellions are not designed to upset the world, but rather to give them satisfaction. This same selfishness—the turning inward of rebellious activity away from social change to personal liberation—characterizes commodified young adult literature from the 1960s onward. As the counterculture became mainstream, so too did rebellion become

normalized, even when it was ineffectual, personal rebellion solely intended to produce individual gain.

## 4.6. FROM CATCHERS TO OUTSIDERS

By the early 1960s, *The Catcher in the Rye* would become one of the most assigned novels for high school students as well as one of the most commonly challenged, or censored, novels in the country (Steinle 3). That is, *The Catcher in the Rye* was simultaneously appreciated by educators who saw potential in the novel's striking depiction of alienation and coming of age while simultaneously being reviled by malcontents concerned by Holden's blasphemous language and subversive lifestyle. In part, this is because the United States was at a crossroads in national character as it struggled with the desire to serve the nation faithfully and patriotically despite the horrors of the war even as it tried to negotiate McCarthy-era conformity and anticommunist rebelliousness. As adults fought over whether *Catcher* had a place in the classroom, the lanky, disaffected, lonely protagonist of *Catcher* bewitched legions of adolescent readers with an unmentionable "seductive power" (Hamilton 4). Holden, the "least missing boy in the world," turned into a leader of lost teens, a modern-day Peter Pan presiding over his New York Neverland.

Holden's rise to the status of "symbol of the alienated youth of the 1950s" (Mickenberg 871) came as a result of timing. As I have shown over the last few chapters, the notion of adolescents as distinctly different creatures—neither children nor adults, similar to but incommensurate with both—had become an unstoppable assumption by the 1950s. By 1949, the juvenile delinquent was not merely part of the racial and economic

underclass, as G. Stanley Hall had originally suggested in 1904. Rather, the JD was slowly becoming a middle-class everykid. Record numbers of adolescents meant teens outnumbered adults. Marginalization and indifference, the approaches of yesteryear, turned almost inevitably to open hostility; teens were increasingly suspended and expelled from school for minor infractions, including long hair on boys. Expulsion rates increased; kids, left with nothing to do during school hours, were jailed for vagrancy and loitering laws that had not been observed for decades. The very same qualities that had been laid upon adolescents as virtues, including the desire to examine society and better understand one's place within it, quickly became adolescent sins.

However, early in the 1950s the icon of adolescent masculinity shifted dramatically, and these sinful delinquents would become all-American saints once again. Rebel tales abounded. Narratives about juvenile delinquency in fiction and film emerged alongside a larger trend of reclaiming past rebels, such as Natty Bumppo and Huck Finn, as national characters. As Leerom Medevoi contends in *Rebels* (2005), works of fiction in literature and film, including *Catcher*, located "the very essence of Americanness in principled dissent" (Gish 3; Medevoi 58-9). The iconic adolescent male who had devoted his life to following orders in the early years of World War II suddenly became the young man who questioned authority in order to preserve his personal liberty. Personal liberty, the freedom to individuate: these rights were seen as unassailable, and in the midst of a Cold War being fought against Communism and its specter of uniformity and fascist imprisonment, tales of dissent flourished as films about the American Way.

Even while McCarthyism characterized dissent as an inherently un-American virtue, the liberation of the self through individuation and narcissism became iconic

features of American masculinity during the Cold War. In part, this was because the very systems instituted in total war to protect the nation, such as surveillance and conformity to social norms, became the target of social ire as they became associated with Communism. In addition, as the US emerged as one of the last remaining dominant political powers in the world, it also was a kind of geopolitical adolescent; formed largely by rebellion from a paternalistic figure, committed to personal liberty, a youthful agent of massive economic and political change on an unprecedented scale.

These national qualities would be the same ones that would lead critic Leslie Fiedler to argue in 1960 that the American novel is by nature a juvenile novel (24), imbued with a reckless and ahistorical point of view that "compulsive[ly] [...] returns to the limited world of experience, usually associated with [the author's] childhood" (24). Yet, even as critics like Fiedler lamented the "incapacity of the American novelist to develop" (24), youthful exuberance and rebelliousness also came to define American national character--particularly American masculinity--as protected from the scourge of totalitarianism by virtue of its unassailable drive to be individually free and self-determining. Where in the 1940s the soldier and the government agent had been valorized on a national scale, in the 1950s and 1960s it was the young, well-meaning, duty-shirking rebel who took his place as the True American Man.

Hollywood likely accelerated the meteoric rise of a young rebel as an icon of American masculinity by turning the rabidly individualistic outsider into the silver-screen heartthrob; the iconic American film protagonist left behind the awkward, wounded serviceman's image and took on the glamorous, tough, pouting look of the JD. Kurt Neuman's *Bad Boy* (1949, starring war hero Audie Murphy as the eponymous bad boy

Danny) set the stage for the iconic Hollywood rebel: sexy, smoldering, and bad to the bone. Laslo Benedek's *The Wild One* (1953) refined the "JD flick" to be even more focused on the charisma of the leading man, casting a young Marlon Brando in the titular role. David Thomson identifies Brando as "the first juvenile delinquent in American culture," fighting for "the right to be misunderstood" (45). While Thomson is not entirely correct, of course, the identification here of the primacy of film in the American cultural fabric is noteworthy. Brando brought star-power to the genre; previous work in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and *Julius Caesa*r (earlier in 1953) brought a powerful stage presence to slumping, mumbling Johnny, not to mention a certain amount of swagger and masculinity. Later films would retroactively strengthen the overt masculinity of Brando's 1953 juvenile delinquent, as films like *On the Waterfront* (1954), though not about an adolescent, nevertheless reinforced many of the visual cues that identified Johnny as an iconic adolescent rebel. But if Brando's role set the mold for the iconic American juvenile delinquent, James Dean's Jim Stark in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) broke it. Weaving together elements of Brando's various rebels, Dean's brooding bad boy with a bike solidified the genre as a blockbuster format, potentially aided by his tragic death at age twenty-four just a month before the film premiered. The iconic American male had been reborn, had rebelled, and had died before anyone could catch him.

The rest of midcentury film was dominated by juvenile delinquency narratives, with more than fifty films about juvenile delinquency being produced between 1955 and 1965. However, with the exception of Paul Newman's prolific rebels, many of these films did not reinforce the goodness of heart that set Murphy, Brando, and Dean's lovable

rebels with causes apart from the garden-variety JD. Instead, they were uncritical depictions of a plague of teens running amok in the streets of the United States. Most had lurid titles referencing crime, hot rodding, gang warfare, the untamed nature of teens, or merely the mention of teens out at night. By 1958, the JD film was a staple of drive-in movie theaters nationwide. The tide would not subside until the early 1960s, but the damage had been done. Teens were officially bad news, and they needed to be controlled at all costs. The voice that would step out of the rubble to rehabilitate the delinquent juvenile needed to be a real teen, talking about real teen problems, in a real teen's language. It needed to be someone who knew firsthand what inner-city teenage gangs were like (even if those gangs were located in, of all places, Tulsa, Oklahoma). In 1963, at the age of fifteen, a young woman named Susan Hinton would begin work on a novel about delinquents with hearts of gold. When the story was finished and published, in 1967, Hinton would become one of the greatest names in young adult literature, all on the basis of telling the story of an outsider. And yet, this outsider was not outside of anything, not really; rather, he was the product of some thirty years of commodification of the outsider identity, packaged in leather and hair gel for unhappy teens nationwide. He would hearken back to the last great bad boy with a heart of gold, Paul Newman, and he would remake the teen as an icon of adolescence forever.

# CONCLUSION. *OUTSIDERS* TO WHOM?

"Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold."

Johnny Cade to Ponyboy Curtis, *The Outsiders*, 154.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to trace the evolution of a particular form of literature for adolescent readers. Based on what we have seen in the previous few chapters, I would like to take a moment to characterize the development of the concept of the young adult. Around the turn of the century, the adolescent was theorized as a discrete category of development to be distinguished from both childhood and adulthood. For the next two decades or so, increased attention to adolescent subjects caused some publishers to publish books specifically featuring teen-aged subjects and discussing teenage topics. At this point in American history, the mere fact that adolescent existence was being noted and described was a kind of validation that many felt was enough. As the cycle of validation, description, and revalidation solidified various beliefs about teens and were reflected in teen experiences, what would become "young adult subjectivity" started to take shape, albeit under different names.

These efforts became more fleshed out during the Depression and World War II, where the focus on controlling adolescents shifted from merely acknowledging their existence to giving them a place in the "natural order," which here means both the development from child to adult and the cultural, societal, and economic roles those two groups play in America. In short, works from this period for teens focused on teaching them how to grow from child to adult by finding where they fit in. These roles often took on nationalist overtones, concerned with the survival of the country, and thereby reinforcing the project of a teenager's maturation as having national importance. It was a

teen's "American duty" to grow up and fit in. The opportunities created by the New Deal and by wartime necessity in the Second World War offered ample space in which teens could find their places and feel as if they fit in.

The major shift that would occur in understanding the adolescent after this period, then, is one of a world of ample opportunities to a world of scarce possibilities. Some of its early incarnations arrived in the midst of the Great Depression, wherein nearly-teenage readers (especially, but not solely girls) were called upon to reflect on how their growth and development as individuals over the next five or six years would in turn mold their adult contributions to American society. As the looming shadow of economic disaster receded and the specter of war grew ever larger on the horizon, these roles shifted from cultural and economic preservation, determined largely by individual industriousness, to concerns about national security and survival, determined primarily by concerted efforts across social strata. And when those youngsters raised believing in the glory of self-sacrifice for the greater good of the United States became war-hardened veterans, they produced literature for the young that refocused their own instabilities and concerns about the role literature should play in the development of a young mind; some, terrified of the horrors of war, endeavored to create safe extraterrestrial locales where magic and wonder could still preserve the presumed sanctity of childhood innocence. Others, fearing that such escapism would only sharpen the blow of adulthood's inevitable arrival, attempted to initiate adolescent readers into the social mechanisms that protected and furthered national institutions like the family, the school, and the military. When, in the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement began in earnest and people started to question the validity of the very mechanisms for which many adolescents had been groomed, the

young adult novel exploded as an opportune arena for safe, carefully-controlled experimentation and subversion of questionable social norms.

Though the lineage can be neatly traced in a few paragraphs, the actual development of what we now call young adult literature was anything but neat, simple, or direct. Rather, what would become commodified young adult literature in the 1960s was the result of more than half a century of shifting attitudes about the role adolescents did and should play in the cultural fabric of the United States. During that time, childhood was extended and periodized into neat developmental categories. As childhood became more piecemeal, so too did the various organizations that sought to control it and the ways that its component parts were characterized. As child labor laws and compulsory education laws kept adolescents out of the labor force for longer, leisure industries of varying quality and merit flooded in seeking increasingly fluid adolescent wealth, trickling down from increasingly affluent parents. Responding equally to the tastes and expectations of both this particular demographic of youth and their parents, the youth culture industry created artistic work crafted especially for a mostly white, middle-class, heteronormative consumer base. As individualism was tempered with antifascist, anticommunist sentiment in the 1940s and 1950s, purveyors of youth culture began to toe an increasingly fine line between supporting individuation and condemning blind conformity (as seen in popular rebel films and hot rod flicks of the mid-1950s and onward) while simultaneously peddling conservative accounts of the importance of social belonging. Falling into ever more concerted lockstep with one another, cultural producers, cultural critics, educators, psychologists, government agents, and advertisers cast the adolescent as an individual torn between two poles: the desire to be free to

discover his or her own identity, but harboring a profound longing to fit into the larger societal picture. Thus was born the iconic adolescent, who struggled against the unfair restrictions placed upon them by authority figures who just didn't understand while striving to find their respective places in the larger system those same authority figures represented.

That the young adult novel became widespread and enjoyed a so-called "golden era" beginning in the 1960s is indisputable. However, why the particular formulation that rose above all others for nearly three decades came to prominence is up for debate. Many scholars have identified *The Outsiders* as the voice of the age, borrowing the author's own authenticating message that the novel faithfully reproduces the experiences of "teen-agers today" by focusing on the problems that they face in everyday life. Still others have lauded the novel for invoking then-popular film stars, literature read by adolescents, music groups enjoyed by teens, and social problems like gang warfare in the inner city. Together, they have produced a nigh-unassailable veneer of authenticity around *The Outsiders*, one which, as the novel enjoyed its fiftieth-anniversary printing in 2017, shows no signs of being pierced. And yet, we must broach the topic because, as many scholars more capable than I have forcefully announced, young adult literature in the 21st century is nearly as white-washed, heteronormative, male-centric, middle-class, and simplistic as children's literature was in 1965. As *the* exemplar of the form of young adult literature which dominated American publishing between roughly 1965 and 1995, *The Outsiders* must be brought to task for the role it has played in this particular formulation of what counts as "young adult literature."

*The Outsiders* is a problem novel, a genre which has been defined by Brian W. Sturm and Karin Michel as simply "realistic stories featuring teenagers that are attempting to deal with stress in their lives" (39). However, the "problem novel" title carries a deeper connotation than this neutral definition suggests. In fact, since the 1970s the problem novel has been critically dismissed as nonliterary drivel, mass-market trash, or worse. In a 1985 issue of *The English Journal*--the quarterly publication of the National Council of Teachers of English--Beth Nelms, Ben Nelms, and Linda Horton decry the genre:

> The problem with adolescent problem novels--now that taboos have been broken--is that they tend to glamorize adolescent problems. Confined safely to 150 pages of uncomplicated fiction, the problems of family tension and violence, child abuse, alcoholism, drug addiction, mental illness, sexual frustration and exploitation, truancy, delinquency, even terminal illness and death in the family lose their rough edges and take on the excitement of a forbidden underworld. (92)

The danger of these novels, of course, is that they will supposedly glamorize the life they depict, leading good kids down dark paths. However, for the most widely panned examples of the genre, such as Bethany Sparks's *Go Ask Alice* (1971), this is completely untrue. Instead, those offensively didactic novels, often falsely advertised as the real diaries of teenagers,[43] are designed instead to shock readers into avoiding the depicted social ills, be they alcoholism, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, or juvenile delinquency.

[43] Most of Sparks's numerous "diary" novels, like *Go Ask Alice*, have been unveiled as entirely fictitious since their publication.

As recently as 2006, in a textbook marketed primarily for K-12 English education courses, David Russell explains that "too often problem novels contain predictable plots, shallow characters and trite dialogue. Sometimes they are sensationalized and devolve into melodrama" (218). As a field, children's and young adult literature studies has more or less ignored the form, save for a few examinations of power dynamics in adolescent fiction by Roberta Seelinger Trites (2007), Kathryn James (2008), and Maria Nikolajeva and Mary Hilton (2012). Recently, however, Joseph Michael Sommers has identified the female problem novel as a unique locus of sororal opportunity. As a confidential space for discourse between author and reader, allows for "sororal dialogism," a reformulation of Marianne Hirsch's "lesbian bonds" (see *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, 1989, p. 133) in which speakers and addressees provide communal empathy and sympathy for their respective psychological experiences (158). As Sommers maintains, authors of the female problem novel like Judy Blume "create these protagonists as significantly flawed so the reader can relate to them" (158). Such relationality breaks open the silencing "miasma of guilt" (O'Keefe 182) and isolation enforced upon adolescents regarding taboo subjects like sexuality.

What, for Sommers, separates the realism of these works from the romanticism of their near-counterpart, the *bildungsroman*, is the problem novel's focus on *struggle*, rather than *growth* (159). Emphasizing the liminal state of becoming, rather than the fixed state of being, the problem novel depicts to readers an unsettled world, in which possibility erupts forth from the everyday (158-159). That normative, commonplace situations can prove so fertile a ground for staging these important discussions about taboos subjects like the body is suggestive of the fantastic power of the real to allow for

imagination. By the same token, in refusing to stabilize the narrative by providing a clean ending, the problem novel "supports [...] not an issue of finding a concrete, permanent solution, but one of getting by day to day before the next problem arises" (160). The problem novel's purpose as a genre is *not* to cleanly suggest, as the *bildungsroman* does, that growth and development is neatly bracketed by the adolescent years; rather, it illuminates how life is, indeed, merely a series of problems to be solved, until a final problem arises which cannot be solved in the traditional way: death.

The distinction Sommers draws about the form of realism used in the sororal dialogue problem novel is of the utmost importance in teasing out the problems associated with the rise of *The Outsiders* as the exemplar of young adult literature in the United States. Importantly, Sommers recognizes the open-endedness of the particular kind of "realism" adopted in works like *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret* (1971) or the wildly popular *Babysitter's Club* series of novels (1986-2000) as indicative of the open-endedness of human growth and change. The books offer no succinct ending because, as in life, there is not always a clear path forward. But the form of "realism" demonstrated by *The Outsiders* is *not* realism at all; rather, *The Outsiders* is a problem novel that uses the romantic *bildungsroman* structure to stabilize its monologic message. That message is clear: by taking the right steps, even the lost can find redemption. These steps are incredibly conservative in form: leaving bad influences behind, being a virtuous person, trying to fit into something larger than oneself, and getting a traditional education.

In critiquing the assumptions that *The Outsiders* projects about how teenagers can change their situations, I do not want to suggest that such efforts are meaningless. Rather,

I want to examine how they are rooted in essentially privileged, presumptive ways of thinking about adolescence that do more harm than good, and reify discriminatory systemic practices. As Eric L. Tribunella argues, most of the rebellious tendencies exhibited by characters in *The Outsiders* have been undercut by the novel's wide acceptance in the educational establishment. Indeed, *The Outsiders* has become "safely ensconced on approved reading lists for schools [...] signal[ling] its endorsement by the very adults who embody authority and establishment" (87). I want to argue more fervently than Tribunella, who contends that *The Outsiders* is canonized in education because it "offers a safe and undisruptive palliative for class inequality and the endemic malaise of modernity" (88). Tribunella concludes his reading of the novel's "sleight of hand" style, in which it promises to address pernicious economic inequality but delivers standard rugged individualism, by characterizing the novel as working "to encourage the reader to remain innocent and unknowing of its own limitations as a solution to the problems of social class" (100). And though Tribunella suspects that "as long as U.S. culture is invested in the image of children or young adults as innocent and unknowing, The Outsiders will continue to be an unproblematized and underachieving mainstay of the high school reading list," (100) he concludes on an optimistic note: perhaps the novel's gaps will inspire young readers to educate themselves and perform the necessary actions they do not see dramatized in the novel (101).

I am not so optimistic as Tribunella in this regard. The history of the development of what would become mass-market young adult literature--that is, exactly the kind of pseudo-rebellious novels, like *The Outsiders* and *Go Ask Alice,* that masquerade as dialogic problem novels--suggests a much larger, more concerted effort across a wide

spectrum of professions, organizations, and interest groups to craft easily consumable yet safe opportunities for "chaperoned" subversion. That the form of young adult literature in the United States has developed according to the mold created by *The Outsiders* suggests, to use Tribunella's words, that *as a whole* young adult literature has tended to "reaffirm a notion of rugged individualism and a faith in American education," (87), lessons which "ultimately disarm" critique and "render it safe for educational institutions" by reaffirming the primacy of established, entrenched American ideals. As I have tried to demonstrate throughout the historical overview this dissertation erects, these ideals underwent significant scrutiny and modification across an array of media formats between the end of the Great Depression and the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. How such ideas as the balance between individualism and social responsibility would be palatably yet safely inscribed upon adolescents in the United States was anything but settled as "teen-agers" became an important demographic group in society. Thus, expressive arts like literature, comic books, film, and television became easy and profitable testing grounds for a variety of permutations of what "youth culture" would look like as a simultaneous outlet for societal frustration and mechanism for control over adolescent subjectivity. To better understand the ramifications of the form this testing yielded, best articulated by *The Outsiders*, we must begin to unpack the issues surrounding its unquestioned dominance of the market since 1967.

## 5.1. NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY: COMMODIFIED YOUNG ADULTHOOD

The first of these issues lies in understanding the relatively mimetic world of *The Outsiders* as realism, rather than an inherently romantic *bildung* tale of growth and

achievement. Valorizing *The Outsiders* for its realism reinforces a binary opposition between romanticism and realism, roughly equivalent to the differences between, say, enchantment and disenchantment, ancient and modern, or childlike and adult. The current critical trend of characterizing the shift in youth literature from 1930 to 1960 as a change from romance to realism --most readily apparent in Gary D. Schmidt's reading of children's literature and Michael Cart's reading of adolescent literature--is overly simplistic and reifies distinctions between child and adult. These distinctions are then used as justification for a host of suspect vertical power relationships whereby adults assume guardianship over the presumed innocence of their young charges.

When we valorize *The Outsiders*' "realistic depiction" of a fourteen-year-old boy's development from innocent, enchanted child to increasingly disenchanted adolescent, we likewise valorize the assumption that adolescence is a time of inherent storm and stress. This *sturm und drang*--itself a proto-romantic notion--is then used to justify a host of similarly vertical power structures that place adolescents between children and adults. More perniciously, however, these same assumptions construct a hierarchy of development from child to adult. Because of its romantic roots, this developmental structure approves of "upward" change leading to adulthood and admonishes "horizontal" experimentation because it does not have an immediately obvious progress effect. Placing the adolescent in a sort of hybrid position between child and adult does nothing but serve the larger power dynamics that ensure adult superiority over youth and posit that adulthood is a time of settled selfhood--something that, in the 21st century, has been widely debunked as false.

Because young adult literature, like children's literature, is marketed by age group, rather than form or genre, the hierarchy placed upon children, adolescents, and adults leads to a hierarchization of the works themselves. This is the second issue presented by our modern understanding of young adult literature. Like children's literature, adolescent literature is relegated to the role of "preparatory" literature; youth read these works to prepare themselves for the rigor of "real" literature. Adults who read it are "remedial" or unsophisticated. Enjoying it indicates juvenility of mind, a lack of erudition, or, for some cultural critics like A.O. Scott, the erosion of American *belles lettres* in favor of mass-market tripe. Such a hierarchy falsely elevates literature written for adults solely because its intended readers have reached the age of majority. By this system's evaluation, nonliterary written material for adults is still better than literary written material for the young.

The best evidence of the systematic subordination of literature for youth to literature for adults lies in that iconic marker of the teen novel, it's "authentic" teen voice. There is nothing inherent about this particular stylistic approach to the form of the young adult novel, but because its exemplary text, *The Outsiders*, uses it, much literature thereafter has taken a descriptive style and turned it into a prescriptive mandate. If one wants to emulate the success of "the bestselling young adult novel of all time" (to borrow Penguin's marketing verbiage from the 50th anniversary edition), then one writes in an "authentic" teen voice. Even works written ostensibly for adults, should they feature teen protagonists or use a linguistic register that is dialectically similar to a teenager's, will be labeled "crossover texts"--good reading for adults, but "cool" enough for the teens to like it as well. Establishing *The Outsiders* as *the* bestselling form of young adult literature, or

even worse as its first example, has led to the standardization of the form according to linguistic patterns that reflect only a small portion of the population of adolescents in the United States. Such standardization, even if only through emulation, has legitimized certain approaches while delegitimizing others. As such, the kind of privileged cruise through the ghetto that *The Outsiders* provides--and which critics above have decried as "glorifying" bad behavior--means that certain marginalized groups who are often the target of such novels, such as underprivileged inner city youths, black youths, pregnant teens, orphans, immigrants, non-Christian believers, and LGBTQ people have been deprived of the opportunity to write back. In being written about, the boundaries of how and when they can speak have been set and increasingly narrowed.

And even beyond the plight of the truly marginalized whose stories still cannot be told or are considered lost--and who I will return to in a moment--adolescents who present similarly to the codified, commodified iconic adolescent have been done a severe disservice by young adult publishing since 1965. This is the third issue that arises from the codification of what "counts" as young adult literature. Normalizing the way that teens speak, think about themselves, understand their role in the world, and desire to change their lot in life has met resistance with the enormous infrastructure of professional discourses designed to examine and understand it. Only in the last five years or so have psychologists begun to question the basic premise that adolescence is characterized by inherent dissatisfaction with life. Though Margaret Mead made suggested as much in the 1920s, as I discuss in the first chapter, the idea took almost ninety years to make it back into the mainstream after the publication of *Coming of Age in Samoa*. As teens are assaulted from all areas of their lives with the repeated suggestion that they are unstable,

incapable of abstract reasoning, inherently prone to rebellion, and out of touch with their own emotional capacity, they internalize those assumptions in a feedback loop that changes their behavior. This is a process called the self-fulfilling prophecy: if one is told often enough that one will fail, and presented with only reinforcement of that eventuality, then most individuals will ultimately give in to the characterization that has been made about them. Teens give up, and parents, educators, psychologists, and critics see this as evidence of their instability. When teens fail to meet these standards, they are labeled anomalous, and the history of corrective measures for delinquents and deviants of all stripes is a lurid one.

This brings us back, inevitably, I suppose, to the largest problem facing the study of young adult literature should we understand *The Outsiders* as its prime example. It is, in many ways, the sum of all the above, and it begins with a facile observation: in examining culture at large, it becomes clear that *The Outsiders* named in the book are, in fact, not outsiders at all. Christine Wilkie-Stibbs explains that literature about young "outsiders" "inscribe[s] child/outsiderness in relation to prescribed normativity, institutionalized power, and insidious hegemonic ideologies" (ix). In a sense, they are abjectified, rendered the dispossessed of the entity or ideology that marginalizes them. In such action, the marginalizing entity infers something about itself. Echoing Julia Kristeva, Wilkie-Stibbs contends that "society, like an individual, can only reject *that which it already recognizes*, so that what we exclude as a society or nation is interior to our very identity as a nation or society" (2, emphasis mine). Thus, when S.E. Hinton marks by naming the Greasers as "outsiders," she constructs them as "projections of what [insiders] find repugnant or alien within themselves" (2).

And yet, Hinton herself had a dual relationship with the Greasers who inspired *The Outsiders*, reporting that they were "inspired by a true-life gang, the members of which were very dear to me" ("Speaking," 183) though she herself grew up like most of Ponyboy's friends, middle-class on Tulsa's east side (*The Outsiders* 163). Because of their familiarity, the depiction of the Greasers in *The Outsiders* is one of intimacy, insidership, a condemnation of the situations that have created the world these boys live in. It is not an attack on delinquents, but Hinton's attempt to "tell their side of the story" so "maybe people would understand then and wouldn't be so quick to judge a boy by the amount of hair oil he wore" (179). In large part, this is from the novel's conservative message about staying in school and being virtuous--staying gold, as Johnny Cade instructs Ponyboy--arises. In a sudden final paragraph, Ponyboy has a *eureka* moment of clarity, declaring that the novel he writes (the text of *The Outsiders*, as it turns out) will teach all these lessons and more about tolerance and understanding.

However, by positioning these truly insiders characters as outsiders, Hinton's novel produces a curious effect. As Mary Douglas notes, people at the margins of categories are most vulnerable within societies while also presenting the most danger to the society from which they are marginalized (4). But even as Wilkie-Stibbs reminds us that the marginalized "attract the greatest degree of social and political attention and are [...] the most demonized" (4), we must not forget that such categorization, even by discourses attempting to mitigate marginality, can and does reinforce marginalizing factors in the world (4-5). Such reinforcement has a secondary effect that has been especially pronounced in the rise of young adult literature modeled after *The Outsiders*, the annihilation of what lies beyond the margins that have been pushed beyond the

boundaries of society. Based on Kristeva's writing about abjection, we know that those who are abjectified by culture are *recognized*; society cannot abjure that which it does not even deign to notice. This is the pernicious mechanism by which the elevation of white, heteronormative, essentially conservative "outsiderness" as the commodified form of young adult literature to the dominant mode of cultural expression has nearly erased other marginalized groups from the literature. When young adult literature, through its mechanisms of power and prestige, names the Greaser boys "the Outsiders," or James Dean and Paul Newman "the rebels," then those truly dangerous to society are completely ejected from the system. They are no longer recognized. They do not even take on the status of *persona non grata*, which is reserved for those abjected by the state. Rather, they become an Orwellian "unperson," *damnatio memoriae*, erased from the memory of existence.

The *damnatio memoriae* of young adult literature have been, until very recently, not merely those who are not white, male, or middle class. It has extended to an entire scope of people to whom the traditional, iconic adolescent experience of becoming has been systemically denied. Whether because of racial laws preventing the education and employment of an entire race of people, or the national domination and erasure of cultural heritage due to "civilizing" efforts, the physical abuse of people for sexual preferences or errors in gender performance, or even something as simple as being one of those dominated groups and yet not experiencing the "real" life of the marginalized, scores of texts by and for people of many colors, sexes, genders, faiths, and lifestyles have been forgotten or erased from our cultural memory. Worse yet, the understanding of the adolescent is so firmly ingrained into American culture that rather than try to

understand its powerful draw as a locus of potentiality for readers of all ages, it is segregated into easily-definable categories of development.

And yet, the power of the commodified iconic adolescent is remarkably resistant to attacks. This year, Oklahoma readies itself as the 50th anniversary of *The Outsiders* will draw literary fans and film pilgrims to the streets of downtown Tulsa. Many of the heartthrob stars of Francis Ford Coppola's 1983 film version, including Rob Lowe and Matt Dillon, will attend one of the many parties, priced for revelers of all economic classes. Danny O'Connor, better known for his work in the music group House of Pain, purchased the rundown home at 731 N. St. Louis Avenue in 2016 with plans to open it as a museum in time for the festivities this year. In April of 2016, the city renamed the nearby cross streets The Outsiders Way and Curtis Brothers Lane. The home, bordered on the north and west by two neighborhoods that have been 99% black since 1960, is surrounded by dilapidated homes, repossessions, and Habitat for Humanity restoration projects. None of the people of color from those historically black North Tulsa neighborhoods made an appearance in either the novel or the film. Though Tulsa sits at the confluence of the Alabama, Coushatta, Cherokee, and Muscogee indian nations, *The Outsiders* is devoid of *any* references to Native Americans--even coded ones. It is clear that the eye-opening features of *The Outsiders* focus with almost painful exclusivity on questions of economic standing, which the novel paints as a result of personal effort and integrity, not circumstance or systemic inequality. In 1965, when Nancy Larrick's analysis of the 95% white world of children's literature was published, racial diversity in youth culture came to the center; in 1967, it was pushed beyond the margins by *The Outsiders*. In 2017, young adults still ache for sensitive, empathetic novels that legitimize

their existence, tales that allow them to feel normal. If the iconic outsider Hinton has created persists, it is unlikely their stories will ever be heard.

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# VITA

## INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED AND DEGREES AWARDED

2010 Central Michigan University, Bachelor of Science.

2012 Central Michigan University, Master of Arts.

## PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS HELD

2011-2012 Graduate Teaching Assistant, Central Michigan University

2012-2017 Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Kentucky

2016-2018 Graduate Research Assistant, University of Kentucky

2018-2019 Research Fellow, University of Kentucky

## SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS

2006-2010 Centralis Academic Scholar, Central Michigan University

2006-2010 Michigan Merit Scholar, Central Michigan University

2009-2012 Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Fellow, Central Michigan University

2010-2012 King/Chavez/Parks Future Faculty Fellow, Central Michigan University

2012-2019 Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Fellow, University of Kentucky

2016 Summer Research Fellow, University of Kentucky

2017 Futures of the American Studies Institute Scholar, University of Kentucky

## PROFESSIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Edited Collections

2019 *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. With Joseph Michael Sommers. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2019.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

2016 "Striking Camp: Empowerment and Re-Presentation in *Lumberjanes*." *Good Grief! Children and Comics*. Eds: Michelle Ann Abate and Joe Sutliff Sanders. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Libraries, 2016.: 69-90.

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Book Chapters

2019 "Introduction" and "Conversation with P. Craig Russell." With Joseph Michael Sommers. In *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Eds. Joseph Michael Sommers and Kyle Eveleth. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2019

2019 [Reprint] "Striking Camp: Empowerment and Re-Presentation in *Lumberjanes*." *Queer as Camp: Essays on Summer, Style, and Sexuality.*

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2013 "First Opinion: A Day in the Life of a Pre-School Daredevil." *First Opinions, Second Reactions* 6.1 (2013): 15-16.

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