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*“I don’t think she’s like the rest of us:” The Freedom in Disadvantage for Orphan Girls
in Early 20th Century Literature*

by

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Honors Thesis

in

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“Diana would never have dared to do such a thing and felt rather aghast at Anne’s freedom”
(*Anne of Green Gables* Montgomery 190)

Marianne Hirsch notes that often, in literature, the absence of the mother is the basis for the heroine’s developmentⁱ. On this foundation, there is nothing new in the observation that orphan girls in literature enjoy a kind of freedom that comes from being without parentsⁱⁱ and, specifically, without a mother. What this paper seeks to examine, however, through the textual analysis of Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi*, Eleanor H. Porter’s *Pollyanna*, Kate Douglas Wiggin’s *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Lucy Maud Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* and Jean Webster’s *Daddy Long Legs*ⁱⁱⁱ, is the way in which the figure of the female orphan is freed from gender and societal roles through a variety of qualities that come with being both disadvantaged and ignorant.

Endowing a turn-of-the-century girl with the freedom to be mischievous, adventurous and imaginative, to *not* heed the exhortations of her female elders, to excel over the boys, to succeed despite, or perhaps because of, her disregard for socially accepted mindsets and behaviors, is no simple or easy task. A very particular kind of protagonist is required to achieve such liberty: she must grow up without the influence of a mother, not because she is a child flouting authority but because she is girl and then a young lady, creating her own idea of what that means. And because there is less expected of the orphan, she is constantly in a position to amaze. She is “quaintly original” (Cadogan and Craig 94) and her personality is formed by the fact that she neither knows nor follows the rules held by those in authority over her or the general expectations of

society as a whole. Quintessential to the orphan-protagonist is this: she is free because she does not know better.

For the purposes of this paper, I would like to make the distinction between an orphan and what I am calling an orphan-protagonist. This kind of orphan is not confined to the social definition of that word but is defined by her ability to use the traits of her condition to transcend social boundaries. She is a strictly literary figure, thus orphan-*protagonist*, whose power cannot be divorced by her creator. Just as Eve Kornfeld and Susan Jackson^{iv} say that authors of the female bildungsroman, “created a utopia...in which the problems of adolescence could be solved” (75), the author of orphan fiction constructs scenarios where the natural qualities that come with *orphan* adolescence give her success and freedom.

In some ways, the figure of the orphan is the means through which girls can have their own version of the American dream. Young boys are allowed this American dream, to independently create themselves to become whatever they choose^v. Early 20th century girls, to a large extent, are not allowed this because of expectations for and restrictions on what a woman can and should be. Orphan girls, because of their background, are not expected to know how to act as girls and women and therefore become unrestricted.

The orphan’s position also gives her transformative powers. Though children in the other novels are drawn to the orphans for their wonderful, unique and various qualities, these peers must remain in their societal roles as boys and girls for as long as they have parents. And since part of the power of the orphan-protagonist is that she is the only orphan in her novel (except for Jimmy in *Pollyanna*, whose purpose is only to show Pollyanna’s freedom as a *girl* orphan), these other characters are bound to stay parented^{vi}.

For the daughters especially, like the contemporaneous readers of the novels, there is room for admiration but not emulation. Perhaps this is why the orphans seem to work better as “spokeswomen” for a suppressed desire, or, as Marion Dane Bauer puts it in her introduction to the 2003 edition of *Rebecca*, “...a repository for all of the romantic values which the world of industry...could not possibly honor” (xi), rather than role models who can be followed. Since the orphans’ freedoms are only accessible through a disadvantaged and motherless life, they *cannot* be followed. These books, then, act more as a type of fantasy than inspirational fiction. The transformation, or healing, is primarily for the adults in the novels.

The Prototypes: Jane Eyre and Sara Crewe

“I sat up half of last night reading *Jane Eyre*...There’s something about those Brontes that fascinates me. Their books, their lives, their spirit...When I was reading about little Jane’s troubles in the charity school I got so angry...I understood exactly how she felt”(Daddy Long Legs Webster 151-2).

Written in the years 1847 and 1905 respectively, Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* and Francis Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess*^{vii} feature protagonists who can be viewed as British prototypes for the orphan-protagonists in this discussion.

Characteristics of these motherless girls seem to be used, removed or manipulated in various ways to especially influence the creation of characters like Rebecca Randall, Anne Shirley and Jerusha Abbott.

For most of her life, Jane Eyre lives on the margins of society: ostracized as a child, she remains quiet, fairly intelligent, earnest, meek and strong in will and morals. Her independence comes from necessity—she has no family. John Seeyle comments directly on Jane as a predecessor saying, “Jane and most of her American daughters are not [blessed with parents]” (12). Jane has no choice but to make a way for herself. As Edward Rochester’s governess, she is considered a servant and does not appear to have

the social freedom that Blanche Ingram, the wealthy heiress in pursuit of Rochester, does. Jane, however, is freer in a way, because she does not have to fulfill expectations of society: no one expects her to marry well, as Blanche's mother expects of her. Hirsch points out, referring to Adrienne Rich's reading of *Jane Eyre*, that it is "Jane's very motherless-ness [that] becomes the key to her success" (46). Jane's only expectations are based on her own sense of morality, so she is free to create herself outside the standards of society.

Jane Eyre is a highly appealing literary figure not only because of her autonomy but also because Bronte organizes the novel to make Jane's standards those which result in reward. She does not leave Rochester and run away to live in obscurity alone: her choice to follow her own guidelines is rewarded with family, wealth and a husband. She succeeds where Blanche has failed through alternate means, acting according to herself and no one else, and succeeds in getting that which Blanche sought--Rochester and wealth. This style of privileging the orphan, and her departure from societal expectations, is used by later authors in varying ways. In Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*, the main character's life as an orphan in the Swiss Alps is contrasted by her friend Clara, who lives a more conventional life in town. Clara, representing what it means to be a "good little girl," is expected to sit quietly and learn school lessons from her tutor. However, Heidi, because she does not have the household--father, tutor, butler, maid and housekeeper-- and does not have to uphold a place in society as anyone's daughter, is released from these expectations. In this way, removed from society, she follows her own ideas of what it means to be a little girl: running free in the mountains to commune with nature. In the end of the novel, like Jane's choice to follow her own sense of morality instead of what

society would view as more important—landing the rich husband--it is Heidi's connection to nature and freedom to play in the mountains that become the "right" way for a little girl to be. It is vital to remember that both Jane and Heidi are free to operate outside societal expectations because they are orphans, not daughters.

Similar situations exist for *Rebecca's* Rebecca Randall, *Anne's* Anne Shirley and *Daddy Long Legs'* Jerusha Abbot. These girls are all imaginative and academically successful; qualities that render them unique among their peers. Just as Jane is free to decide her own destiny through her peculiar traits and ends up with Rochester still, these girls may be on the path that leads to marriage and motherhood but they are not confined to it. During their formative years, they are free to explore what they consider important. As with Jane, their freedom makes them more appealing to their respective men. Adam Ladd is entranced by and financially generous to the precocious and intelligent Rebecca, far more than beautiful Emma Jane; Gilbert Blythe admires his academic adversary Anne and is drawn to her as his equal; Jarvis Pendleton celebrates Jerusha's academic abilities through his patronage and falls in love with her through letters of imaginative ramblings, favoring her over his niece, who is both beautiful and well-established. Again, the authors structure the novels so that the orphans, though they are not directly seeking these men as rewards or goals, get their man anyway through exerting their freedom from expectations.

The departure from Jane, in the early 20th century, comes in part from the fact that the girls in this discussion, with the exception of Heidi, are from North America. This frees them from the class issues that isolated Jane. Removed to a manor house as a servant, Jane receives none of the praise and exposure that the early 20th century girls enjoy. By removing these class restrictions, these girls can move above their orphan

status through more ways than just marriage—whether it is through success in school or meeting (and charming) the right people with their personalities, they gain homes and circles of admirers. As a servant, Jane could never be compared to Blanche; her autonomy, though legitimate, seems almost inexorably linked to her poverty. Authors of the early 20th century novels can allow their orphans to succeed because dominant American/Canadian ideology wants to say they are morally, socially, politically equal. Instead of being bound by a societal role, as Jane arguably is, these orphans are granted a sort of societal immunity—posing as daughters, with home, clothing, education and guardians—with infinitely more freedom.

Just as the later orphans have Jane's freedom, so too do they have Sara Crewe's personality. Sara's fall from a high social class standing to that of servant accounts for the qualities she possess as an orphan. Even in the novella, which does not include the novel's details of Sara's time as a pupil, she is established as a "little princess" because, without a mother, she has enjoyed sole love of her doting father. Her privileged upbringing equips her into orphan-hood; compared to fellow orphan and long-term servant girl Becky, Sara is the "advantaged orphan." Private education has made her smart and talented; an exotic childhood has allowed her freedom to imagine and see life through her own exciting lens. Because of her wealth, the rules of pupil do not apply to Sara when she is one;^{viii} therefore, having been established in this way already, the "rules of orphan" seem not to apply either. Armed with princess qualities as an orphan, Sara becomes a sympathetic character as well—and is rewarded. Joe Sutliff Sanders points out that, "...because Sara is so noble, kind and unresentful—[other characters in the novel] can look at her with pity and admiration—they can sympathize" (54)^{ix}.

American and Canadian authors manipulate this figure, like Jane, to fit a society with a less rigid definition of class. Orphans like Rebecca, Anne, Jerusha and Pollyanna begin their novels as a little-princess-in-the-attic. In other words, they do not fall from wealth into servitude, but, already orphans, they are endowed by the authors with all the brilliance, imagination and freedom to do things their own way. By not representing a mother at all, the novelists make their heroines utterly their own creations. Using Sara Crewe as a model, it seems orphan-protagonists must be equipped with these traits in order to survive and succeed—they are “ready-formed at the beginning...[with] little scope for development^x” (Cadogan and Craig 90). However, the authors of the North American girls omit the wealthy background to show these girls have that kind of equality discussed earlier and thus comes the manipulation. While it is acknowledged for Sara that her background sets her above her peers, the North American authors give no justification as to why their girls are remarkable. This contrast is perhaps most unwittingly revealed through a statement in Wiggin’s novel: “‘I look like a drudge,’ said Rebecca mysteriously, with laughing eyes, ‘but I really am a princess; you mustn’t tell, but this is only a disguise’” (Wiggin 326). This language of this statement echoes Sara Crewe’s words in the novella: “I am a princess in rags and tatters. . . I am a princess inside” (Sara Crewe 10). Sara is aware of her power as a princess, *despite* her rags, recognizing here that if (and when) Miss Minchin sees what (Sara) really is, Miss Minchin would be punished for treating Sara as she has. She is a princess inside, waiting to shed her rags and show her true self. The difference in the later novels is that the orphans’ power comes from being princesses-in-rags. These royally talented girls must stay “disguised” as orphans to be effective protagonists.

In a way, the North American authors have reversed Burnett's structure: in *A Little Princess*, readers and other characters feel sympathy for Sara because she continues, due to her advantaged childhood, to have a remarkable personality despite being an orphan. Sanders notes that, in order for other characters to feel sympathy, they must feel affection and admiration as well or else "sympathy becomes pity" (44). He adds that authors, "[instruct] their weak characters...in the art of being pleasant, of being good...orphans...[Those] who bear up well under the weight of their affliction...are admired" (44). In the North American novels, there is an immediate sympathy for the girls simply because they are spirited and cheerful orphans. This initial sympathy provides for the freedom to create the girls as talented, vivacious and brave as possible--as well as to give them material advantage. Sanders says, "Anyone at all susceptible to sympathy falls for Sara, and just as Adam Ladd provided Rebecca with financial ease or Aunt Polly showered trinkets on her young charge, these sympathetic adults go out of their way to give the orphan girl the money and goods her heart desires" (54). These orphans do not require a privileged background—only the kind of personality it results in. Thus, the authors legitimize giving their orphan the personality of an advantaged girl by making her disadvantaged.

The slight exception to this endowment of traits by the authors instead of by upbringing is *Pollyanna*. The source of Pollyanna's cheerful, kind, loving, appreciative and positive personality comes from the glad game, where in every situation one must find something to be glad about. The game was invented by Pollyanna's father, who continues posthumously to be the greatest influence in his daughter's life in the novel. Much like Sara Crewe, whose remarkable personality as an orphan reflects her privileged

background, Pollyanna is able to cope with being an orphan because she has been equipped by her father to have this sunny (and sickening) outlook. While in *A Little Princess* a privileged background leads to a unique personality which leads to a remarkable and sympathetic orphan, Porter changes the pattern so that Pollyanna's father provides her directly with the personality, allowing her, without any period of advantage, to be sympathetic from the outset.

The combination of these two prototypes results in an orphan figure who possesses the most important qualities of both: like Jane, she is autonomous (if not as much in deed then at least in thought) and sets her own standards. Jane, though quietly smart and brave, is not as talented and personable as the later orphans; she remains plain, refusing Rochester's offerings of clothing and jewelry, whereas the later authors take advantage of their girls' orphan status, using the sympathy of other characters to gain them gifts and admiration^{xi}. Like Sara, the later orphan is imaginative, bright and popular. Just as Sara Crewe operated outside of the "rules" of what an orphan's life should be like, the later girls further this freedom by operating outside the very rules of girlhood.

The five novels

Though the heart of this argument lies in the pattern of similarities in these novels, the age range of the girls makes for some important differences. Heidi and Pollyanna, at eight- and eleven-years-old respectively, remain children throughout their novels; Anne and Rebecca begin their novels at ten- or eleven-years-old and grow up to

around 18-years-old; Jerusha begins her novel at 17-years-old and grows up to 22-years-old. These ages are important to what kind of power is available to the orphan and what kinds of characters she impacts most.

As children, the orphans typically have a deep connection with and appreciation for nature, and exuberance for life. I argue that these particular traits make the orphans, ever so vaguely, otherworldly. They are often described as strange looking with bright eyes: “the child’s black eyes were sparkling in expectation of all the things to come” (Spyri 39); “her eyes astar with dreams...half-unearthly...”(Montgomery 50); “[Rebecca’s eyes] glowed like two stars, their lights half hidden in lustrous darkness...their steadfast gaze was brilliant and mysterious” (Wiggin 8). Their “otherworldliness” comes from the fact that these orphans are born, in varying degrees, not out of parents but out of the authors, making them “impossibly well-adjusted and sunny dispositioned children, whose own characters appeared to need very little modification” (Cadogan and Craig 89). Not only are social “rules” new to these children but everything they experience seems to be new and most of it wonderful. Amiran says, “The child is close to nature...Adults who are no longer linked to their own childhood can be restored through the child’s vision, that is, they can recover some of that inarticulate understanding and joy” (86). Thus, as Claudia Nelson puts it, the “work” of such orphans is not physical but emotional: “such children embody a national myth of orphan as transformative force” (54)—their power lies in their ability to heal the adults in their lives.

As the orphans enter their school years, they become brave, adventurous and imaginative. As pre-young ladies, manners become a concern but their bravery, no longer

simply the innocent fearlessness of a child, emboldens them to do things that would be considered socially unacceptable. Through their teen years, the orphans start to become beautiful and their freedom from girls' roles as children becomes freedom *among* the roles of young ladies; though they cannot flout all social standards as they did when they were younger, their orphan-protagonist qualities—their intelligence and charm and bravery—allow them to pick the best of what is available. They succeed academically in high school and college, qualify to be teachers and writers, and land adoring, wealthy, smart and sought-after men^{xii}.

In adolescence, they are leaders among their friends because of their autonomy and the female adults in their lives become frustrated with the orphans' inability to act as "proper girls." If the novels continue into the later teens though, the orphans surpass their friends, becoming "best" instead of "different." John Tibbetts defines the success of these girls when "their imagination, aggression, humor, self-sufficiency, and physical energies [are channeled] into a productive and valuable-yet-womanly conduct" (51). Additionally, the guardians begin to value the orphans, realizing that their freedom as a girl produces a poised young lady with the world at her feet.

The earliest published of the five novels is Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*, in 1888. The orphan-protagonist, sharing the same name as the novel, is also the youngest of the five girls in this discussion. Her story shares the themes of the other girls' but in simple and sometimes exaggerated ways. Perhaps most notably, Heidi is literally removed from society where the other orphans are only symbolically removed: she lives in an isolated world which lacks the restrictions of normal society, while the others must create this "world" by living in society but not following its norms. Heidi is endowed by the author

with traits which reflect her environment: she is a bright, cheerful, hardy girl, who has a deep connection with nature. Heidi's most important qualities, though, are related to the fact that she is a child; in orphan terms, this means she is at her peak as a healer.

Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna* deals, like *Heidi*, with the orphan-protagonist in childhood. The 1913 book features a horrifically glad little girl-- Cadogan and Craig call her "the most idiotic" (89)--who gains her power as an orphan through a pre-novel life with her father. Porter drives the figure of the orphan-protagonist to extremes with the endowment of an exaggerated appreciation and "gladness" for life-- one that reaches unrealistic and ridiculous proportions. Like Heidi, through the innocence she derives from a previously poor and isolated life, Pollyanna heals and transforms nearly every character she comes in contact with. She "heals" through the naive assumption that everyone is as innately good as she is and that they share, or should share, her gladness.

Though *Heidi* is the earliest of these books, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* is considered the first real orphan novel^{xiii}. As a girl of 10, Rebecca Rowena Randall leaves her poor, rural life on Sunnybrook Farm to gain an education in a larger town. Though she actually has a mother, she spends the majority of the novel living in Riverboro with her two elderly aunts. Wiggin makes it clear that, "Necessity has only made her brave; poverty has only made her daring and self-reliant" (Wiggin 268). Because she is disadvantaged from the outset, Wiggin is not only setting forth that these disadvantages produce character, but also uses these disadvantages to endow Rebecca with extraordinary characteristics.

Anne Shirley, of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, is called the "most expertly realized" of these orphans (Cadogan and Craig 89). Like Rebecca, she

develops throughout the novel from a girl to young woman, but Anne is everything Rebecca is and more: smarter, wiser, braver and more imaginative. John Seelye remarks on the similarity of these novels, saying Montgomery “had Wiggin’s book open before her as she sat down to write her novel in 1904” (333). Cadogan and Craig distinguish that “Montgomery makes Anne a more valid creation than the endlessly overpraised Rebecca...” (94). Of those varying degrees of being “born” out of the author, Anne’s case is the most extreme. There is nothing in the novel about her family or where she came from and the few memories she does have are of a mildly hard life, working as a sort of servant-nanny. Thus, Anne is primarily the daughter of Montgomery’s mind. Marilla Cuthbert, Anne’s guardian, cannot act as Anne’s mother because the orphan has essentially been born into the world fully formed. With a comfortable home setting and guardians who do not have the power as parents, Seelye says, “Never has an orphan... had such an easy time of it” (334). Anne’s “mother,” Montgomery, has is free to create a gifted and likeable girl. Julia McQuillan and Julie Pfeiffer assert that “Avonlea is clearly a community (like most) in which people are defined by the social location that they occupy (mother, daughter, son, aunt etc.)” (24). But because Anne is unassigned a “social location,” she is free to create and inhabit her own.

Without the resources of a normal childhood, Anne and Rebecca become the most outstanding children in the society of their novels. The authors set up the orphan as a character that readers want to succeed--she is disadvantaged, but vibrant and imaginative in spite of it. Wiggin uses the first time Rebecca is given praise in the novel, by her classmates and teacher, to set Rebecca up as a “deserving” heroine. The language is deliberate: “Rebecca... felt tears rising in her eyes...for in her ignorant lonely little life

has she never been singled out for applause, never lauded, nor crowned, as in this wonderful, dazzling moment” (86). Montgomery goes further with this idea. In the beginning of the novel, Anne says, “nobody would take me...They didn’t want me at the asylum either” (39). Montgomery uses Anne’s life as a “real” orphan (as opposed to the highly advantaged and materially comfortable orphan-protagonist) to establish her as deserving.

The idea of the “real” orphan is what distinguishes *Daddy Long Legs*’ Jerusha Abbot from the other girls, because she spends her childhood and adolescence as one. Her early life in the orphanage included taking care of younger children, cleaning, cooking and generally “doing everyone’s bidding” (Webster 4). Many of the personality traits that benefit the younger orphans throughout their novels, like bravery, intelligence and the ability to imagine, are not present as strongly in Jerusha. This is both because, as a young woman, they are not as effective in her circumstances and also because these “powers” been weakened during her time as a “real” orphan. She is “eager” and “adventurous” but her imagination is limited because that is what the orphanage “stamps out” (Webster 153)^{xiv}. Because her entry to the novel happens simultaneously with her entrance to society as a young woman^{xv}, Jerusha is more aware of her status as an orphan. Though this awareness costs her some of the freedom the other girls enjoy, it also allows her to take conscious advantage of the fact that she *is* an ignorant orphan, from whom nothing is expected.

Jerusha’s disadvantage does not give her the freedoms the other girls enjoy—it is simply *because* she is disadvantaged that she is allowed to lead such a privileged life in the novel. She is almost the exact opposite of Sara Crewe—she is not the remarkable

orphan, but the orphan who becomes remarkable. In a literary sense, the material advantage that Jerusha enjoys through the wealthy Jarvis Pendleton would not be as acceptable or interesting if she were *not* an orphan. From the outset, Jerusha's situation is appealing to the reader because, as a poor orphan, she is deserving *as a figure* even if we are not yet acquainted with her personality. I make my departure from Sanders in this instance, for, it is not just that these "skilled wielder[s] of sympathy" (56) gain material goods through other characters but through the readers. Though Sanders certainly makes the point that the sympathy is as important for the reader as well as the adult characters in the novels, I want to assert it is the reader, in the tradition of orphan fiction, who *allows* the girls to attain these goods through their acceptance of her as a character.

Freedom (from boys and daughters' roles)

The overarching source of freedom for the orphan-protagonist is her freedom from and transcendence over standard social and gender roles. McQuillan and Pfeiffer^{xvi} say, "Children are taught how to fill sex roles" and "learn the rules and requirements of being an adult woman..." (24) and further, "...in most communities, there are right [and wrong] ways...of doing things guided by gendered assumptions" (26). The orphan is free from these roles because, at the beginning of the novel, she has, conveniently, not been taught them. Before comparing the orphan to those in *conventional* gender roles within the novel, it is necessary for a moment to examine the difference between boy and girl orphans in literature and why it is the figure of the girl orphan who has access to this freedom. Consider *Anne's* Marilla, who, "...had prepared a couch in the kitchen chamber for the desired and expected boy. But . . . it did not seem quite the thing to put a girl there somehow" (29). It seems unfitting to have a young scrappy orphan-boy-taking-on-the-

world-as-an-adventure getting coddled by guardians or an admiring community. For him, the more independent, the better. Minda Rae Amiran says, “In the prototypical [orphan] story the boy...sets out to make his fortune while the girl is sent to live with a spinster aunt” (85). However I would like to argue that there is advantage in this. Boys are *expected* by characters and readers alike to be smart and resourceful, while girl orphans, acting in the same way, generate sympathy and awe. Just as she does with boys who are *not* orphans, the girl orphan can move into the role of the boy orphan, achieve what he achieves and be praised for it: not only can she fill his role but she can surpass him in it.

There is evidence of this in *Pollyanna*'s orphan boy, Jimmy. Girl orphan Pollyanna moves into her aunt's big house to enjoy sewing, cooking and music lessons: boy orphan Jimmy is homeless. He says, “‘I've tried four houses, but—they didn't want me—though I said I expected ter work, 'course” (69). Both as a figure in literature, and a character within the novel, Pollyanna, the girl orphan, would never be expected to work. Even her placement in the attic room instead of the guest room sends shocks of sympathy throughout the Harrington household. *Heidi*'s Peter, though not an orphan, shares similar disadvantages with Heidi: poverty, sporadic education and isolation from the rest of society. Heidi prevails because, through her bright and unique personality, she gains sympathy: as a little girl, she needs to be cared for. Peter, meanwhile, is expected to be self-sufficient, as well as to care for his family. His failure to meet these expectations leaves room for Heidi to step in and accomplish what Peter could not—caring for the family financially and bringing joy into the grandmother's life.

The orphan is able to move across gender roles through what these authors purport is ignorance or naiveté. Since she comes into the “world” of the novel ignorant of

the restrictions on girls, she does not have to ascribe to them: her naiveté absolves her from conforming to cultural expectations. Wiggin, for example, gives Rebecca a particular background: poor, obscure, relatively removed from society. Thus, she arrives in Riverboro presumably uneducated about current gender roles except for an extremely simplistic view: “Boys always do the nice splendid things, and girls can only do the nasty dull ones that get left over. They can’t climb so high, or go so far, or stay out so late, or run so fast or anything” (Wiggin 11). Rebecca sees the distinctions between boys and girls of the day but remains removed from both groups. Her reference to girls as “they” instead of “we” shows that Rebecca does not count herself among the girls who are unable to have the fun that boys can. She may become aware of societal restrictions but learns she does not have to operate within them.

Heidi’s navigation through gender and societal roles begins almost immediately as the novel opens. While traveling up the mountain to live with her grandfather, Heidi removes the dresses she is bundled in and joins Peter to run with the goats on the mountains. Upon seeing Heidi like this, Deta, Heidi’s aunt and guardian up to the time of the novel, says, ““Heidi what have you done?. . . Where are your dresses and your shawl.... and the new stockings that I made myself?”” (Spyri 31). When Deta sees the things in a heap she continues, ““What does all this mean? Why have you taken your things off?””, to which Heidi replies, ““Because I do not need them”” (31). As Heidi removes these feminine garments, made and imposed by her aunt, she is symbolically removing that which restricts her from engaging in the same actions as Peter. This establishes her equality with and eventual superiority over, boys. (Many locations and characters in *Heidi* are used symbolically; Peter represents boys and later the Sesemann’s

house represents society). She is also throwing off the last remnants of her mother, as she begins to establish her own concept of what it means to be a girl. She is not only freeing herself the *restriction* of the clothing, but with her assertion that she does “not need them” Heidi is put in a superior position to her aunt who, as a young lady about to enter society, *does* need them. While some of Heidi’s freedom in this particular moment is because she is a child, Spyri makes it clear throughout the novel that Heidi’s place is on the mountain and her actions there importantly mark the beginning of who she will make herself to be.

While in *Heidi* readers are only shown this first step into self-creation, *Rebecca* and *Anne* are novels centered on the orphan’s development—both follow their own personal model for girlhood and, later, young womanhood. It is important to note that both authors give the girls’ guardians a personality that undermines any authority they would have as role models. Rebecca’s Aunt Miranda’s strict, duty-conscious Puritanical attitude sets her up to be Rebecca’s foil, not a stand-in mother. Similarly, Anne’s Marilla is exaggerated in her gruffness and narrow-mindedness, characteristics used by Montgomery to show that, most of the time, Marilla is wrong. Thus, the orphans hold themselves to standards which are outside of commonly held ideas about gender and because they have no one who can *convincingly* tell her that this is what a girl is supposed to do and how a girl should be.

In *Rebecca*, young girls are expected to be beautiful and dutiful, but Wiggin makes carefully sure that the reader is aware of Rebecca’s potential to achieve more. Cadogan and Craig say, “Conventional good looks, since they are temporarily denied to Rebecca...are disparaged whenever they occur in someone else” (92). Beauty is not

highly regarded by the author, as it is simply indicative of what a little girl can accomplish within her gender. Rebecca says to Emma Jane, “‘I wish I was like you—pretty in all colors!’ And Rebecca looked longingly at Emma Jane’s fat, rosy cheeks; at her blue eyes, which said nothing; at her neat nose, which had no character; at her red lips, from between which word worth listening to had ever issued” (153). Even if Rebecca, as a child, seeks to be conventional, the intrusive language forces the reader to favor Rebecca’s unconventionality. Wiggin enables Rebecca to reach for more than the simple fruition of girlhood—and so she does.

As young girls, Rebecca and Anne value clothes and beauty, things are available to their parented peers but not to them--yet. Indeed, though beauty is “temporarily denied” to the orphans, “the implication is always there that she will ‘blossom’ at the right moment” (Cadogan and Craig 92). As they grow up, however, they first come into themselves as intelligent and ambitious young woman. As Anne’s high school commencement approaches, her friends’ concern is what they are going to wear: “...the chatter drifted into a side eddy of fashions” while Anne instead, “...looked out...and wove her dreams of a possible future...All the Beyond was hers with its possibilities lurking rosily” (228). The contrast, though subtle, clearly sets Anne’s aspirations above the somewhat limited views of her friends.

As these two orphans grow up and gain admiration from other characters in the novel, an admiration orchestrated to convince the readers to admire them as well, they are rewarded for their ability to transcend the conventional goals of girlhood, ironically, with beauty. Wiggin makes this clear through Rebecca’s beautiful high school classmate Huldah Meserve, who remarks jealously, “‘I only wish I was tall and dark and had the

gift of making people believe I was great things” (252). Anne develops similarly; her best friend Diana remarks, ““There’s something so stylish about you, Anne... You hold your head with such an air”” (Montgomery 214). Thus, the orphan gets it all—beauty, brains and spirit—and other characters heap praise on her for it, encouraging readers to do the same.

In this way, the orphan-protagonist is not confined to the expectations of how a girl should act, and as a girl playing in boys’ roles she can also accomplish more than the boys themselves can. Again, since boys are held as more intelligent and, consequently, the ones with academic power, the orphan becomes remarkable in her scholastic abilities, while the boys are only doing what is expected of them. Heidi, at first, balks at the idea of learning to read because, ““Peter told me, and he tried over and over again, but he could not do it, for it is too hard”” (140). Such a statement upholds the idea that, even in *Heidi*’s relatively isolated location of Frankfurt and the Alp, boys are academically superior to girls: if Peter could not read then Heidi certainly would not be able. However, Heidi, like all the orphan-protagonists in this discussion, is naturally bright: ““Heidi had suddenly learned to read with the utmost correctness, most rare with beginners”” (144). As a girl orphan-protagonist, Heidi is doubly gifted here: as a girl, she has the opportunity to learn to read through the sympathy of the grandmama, something boy Peter does not have access to, and as an orphan-protagonist, she is endowed with intelligence from the start of the novel.

Rebecca says, “I am smarter than all the girls but one but not so smart as two boys” (Wiggin 46). She is not at the top of her class, as is the case with Anne in *Avonlea*, but the fact that she makes this statement shows that she measures herself against both

genders and finds here that she is more suited to compete with boys. It is Rebecca's attitude, not her brains, which set her apart. While she is in high school, the text notes, "With Dick Carter she could at least talk intelligently about lessons" (Wiggin 171). While Anne is smarter than her male competitors, Rebecca simply has the audacity or the naïveté, as Wiggin would have the reader see it, to move into the male realm when it is convenient.

As school-aged girls, Rebecca and Anne's achievements carry extra weight, *because they are girls*. Rebecca's intellectual ability to cross gender roles is extraordinary to many adults in the novel, especially Jerry Cobb. She tells him, "Dick Carter says the editor is always a boy, of course; he allows girls to try and write for it, and then chooses the best. Dick thinks I can be in it" (Wiggin 129). The editor of Wareham Academy's newspaper is not only "always" a boy but expectedly so, and though the language is now almost shocking in its sexism-- he "allows" girls to become writers—this passage is indicative of the type of accepted academic environment in which Rebecca, and presumably Anne, must navigate.

Anne's intelligence, and resulting academic success^{xvii}, is one of the main qualities which sets her apart from other girls. Her accomplishments are many, from celebrated recitations to college scholarships. The fact that Anne is *uncommonly* smart is made clear by the fact that her fiercest academic adversary is a boy, Gilbert Blythe. The narrator explains their competition in grade school, with language which implies not Gilbert's but Anne's academic superiority over the rest of the class: "Gilbert was as determined to be first in the class as Anne was. *He was a foeman worthy of her steel*. The other members of the class tacitly acknowledged their superiority, and never dreamed of

trying to compete with them” (197, emphasis added). Gilbert and Anne move on to share the top spot for passing the high school examination--Anne is not just as smart as a boy but as smart as the *smartest* boy: she is not just moving among roles, she is transcending them.

Anne and Gilbert’s shared victory of top class placement is an interesting one: instead of establishing Anne’s equality with Gilbert, it actually reinforces her transcendence over him. Gilbert, as the smartest boy, is expected to pass first in the class; Anne as a girl *and* as an orphan, garners infinitely more amazement and praise by achieving the exact same thing. The same goes when they are both eligible for a medal, given to the student with the highest marks, and a scholarship to college: Anne is, of course, amongst only boys in both categories and though Gilbert wins the medal, Anne wins the scholarship. Whether or not this means that Anne is *smarter* than Gilbert, and she very well may be, Montgomery grants Anne the more impressive reward to assert that she is more deserving.

For Rebecca the transcendence of roles also means more than just freedom, but superiority as well. Jerry Cobb, in response to Rebecca’s above statement, says, “‘I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if you had to write the whole paper; an’ as for any boy editor, you could lick him writin’, I bate ye, with one hand tied behind ye’” (Wiggin 129). If Rebecca were a boy, she would have to possess significant talent to simply usurp the position as editor on skill. Cobb’s statement, to the reader, would seem biased and grandfatherly, as the two boys would probably be on an even playing field. And if Rebecca were any other girl, the notion of her being better than the editor would seem misplaced and unfounded. Certainly, in that case, the hyperbole of beating him with one

hand seems not only untrue but ridiculous. However, Cobb's is a plausible statement—indeed, one which has readers nodding their heads in agreement—because Rebecca herself, especially at this point in the novel, is so convincingly extraordinary.

Because Rebecca is not as smart as Anne, her “disadvantaged advantage” is exaggerated to give her a different kind of success. The author sets up two of Rebecca's strongest admirers to exclaim on her unique qualities as a student, emphasizing her freedom of thought: ““She can be perfectly ignorant of a subject” said Miss Maxwell to Adam Ladd, ‘but entirely intelligent the moment she has a clue. Most of the other girls are full of information and as stupid as sheep’” (Wiggin 251). The narrator also notes, “She [Rebecca] commonly had some original theory to expound; it was not always correct, but it was generally unique and sometimes amusing” (251). The language of these two quotes implies much more than Rebecca's being remarkably adaptable or intelligent; in fact, Miss Maxwell's seemingly innocuous statement on Rebecca's academic abilities is actually a symbol of how the orphan operates within society in comparison to her female peers. While other girls have all this “information,” which can be seen as advantage, on various “subjects,” they do not have the “freedom” (251) Rebecca does in her “understanding” (251). What Miss Maxwell's statement symbolically exposes is that these girls are actually trapped by their knowledge, trapped by what they have been taught and by their backgrounds, because they cannot “un-know” their places in society. At school, they are expected to provide answers that are not unique or amusing, but correct. Outside of school, they are expected to act according to what they know it means to be a girl— and what their mothers have taught them.

Because Rebecca has so little knowledge, her unique way of doing things appears brilliant. The reader is also reminded, immediately after narrator's laudatory address of Rebecca as a student, "She was distinctly one of the poorer girls; she had no fine dresses to attract attention, no visitors, no friends in the town . . ." (Wiggin 251). What the first schoolroom exchanges reveal is this: if a girl who was expected to "know the answers" in class, or, in the same way, if a girl who knew what it meant to properly act her societal role, were to assume Rebecca's attitude, she would be called foolish in the first case and rebellious in the second. The orphan, however, is praised for acting outside of roles. The text continues, "She had naturally settled into the same sort of leadership which has been hers in the smaller community of Riverboro. She was unanimously elected assistant editor of the *Wareham School Pilot* being the first girl to assume that enviable . . . position" (Wiggin 251). Not only do the other girls look up to Rebecca, but she is rewarded by her peers to excel even farther out of conventionally-assigned gender roles. Thus the orphan's initial disadvantage puts her in a position to operate outside of expectations and leads to a sort of social invincibility for the school-aged orphan, and an independence which is impossible for her classmates.

Before discussing how Rebecca's ability to move outside academic boundaries translates to the movement outside social boundaries, it is necessary to pause and consider how Jerusha Abbot's disadvantages among her peers result in very different consequences. Like the other orphans, Jerusha enjoys an author-endowed intelligence, provided to compensate for the disadvantage of her background. She is even distinguished from her classmates--her poem appears in the monthly paper of her college, "a very great honor for a Freshman" (60), she is awarded a scholarship, wins a short story

contest and has another accepted for publication. As with Rebecca and Anne, it is not Jerusha's intelligence that is lacking but her knowledge. The similarity, however, ends there. Jerusha writes, "Half the time I don't even know what the girls are talking about; their jokes seem to relate to a past that every one but me has shared. I'm a foreigner in the world and I don't understand the language. It's a miserable feeling" and again, "The trouble with college is that you are expected to know such a lot of things that you've never learned...It's very embarrassing at times" (Webster 36, 29). Here, Jerusha uncovers a crucial aspect of these novels--the timely transition from orphan to orphan-protagonist. It is a transition that has come, for Jerusha, almost too late. She is the only orphan-protagonist to experience the discomfort of a lack of knowledge, instead of benefiting from it—showing the importance of the community's embrace and admiration of the orphan-protagonist as a child. Her story is the version of what the Rebecca and Anne were saved from experiencing, as they are allowed to *grow up* acting as orphan-protagonists. Jerusha is "embarrassed," where Rebecca is praised: her age works against her disadvantage, turning her into one of Rebecca's classmates who "should have known better."

To return to Rebecca, it is in this spirit of "disadvantage-granted" freedom that she sells Adam Ladd 350 bars of soap. Note, again, the language of the text with regards to Emma Jane compared to Rebecca: "Housewives looked at Emma Jane and desired no soap . . . Other stars in their courses governed Rebecca's doings. . .the lucky Rebecca accomplished, with almost no effort, results that poor little Emma Jane failed to attain by hard and conscientious labor" (Wiggin 145). It is necessary to stop a moment here and make the point that the "stars" which govern Rebecca are actually Wiggin's deliberate

control over her personality traits and circumstances. Rebecca is “lucky” because she is endowed with courage by the author and Emma Jane is her foil, playing the only role she has available. Rebecca approaches the Ladd house when Emma Jane is afraid to, both because she does not know whose house it is and there appears to be no one home. Rebecca, as an orphan, presumably does not have the background of proper etiquette that keeps Emma Jane politely afraid of strangers. In a sense, Rebecca has nothing to lose because she does not have the sense of breaking any societal codes—she has not had the proper upbringing to instill this kind of fear. Because Rebecca is independent of the ideologies of adults in society, she is also independent of the consequences.

Because Rebecca does not know the right way to move about in society, Wiggin provides her with courage. Rebecca, moving about freely in uncharted territory, between roles, needs this bravery to both execute the movement and to gain acceptance from, or to put it more accurately, charm the other characters. Wiggin emphasizes this to the readers, as the text states, “What child in Riverboro could be described as remarkable and winning, save Rebecca? . . . was there ever a child in the world who could make a man buy soap by the hundred cakes, save Rebecca?”(159). Emma Jane does not need courage because she will never be in the situations which require it to move forward. She will always stay in the role of proper little girl, or, more accurately, the daughter.

The Daughter

“Then Rebecca had gone away, and in the long months of absence her mind and soul had grown out of her mother’s knowledge, so that now, when Aurelia had time and strength to study her child, she was like some enchanted changeling.”(Wiggin 323)

The expectations of young girls in society start with their expectations as daughters. There is a set of standards for the daughter in society during the time of these books. In *Heidi*, Clara Sesemann sits in the gap between daughter and orphan, the rare

position which makes her the only child in these books who is changed by an orphan-protagonist. Clara is introduced through her household, and its contrast to everything that Heidi knows. The Sesemann house is a place where, “A great many rules followed now about behavior at all times...” (Spyri 103), showing society as strict and proper, with wearisome expectations about the conduct of children. Because Heidi is portrayed as so natural, so unfitted for this environment, the Alp is reinforced as representing the free world of the orphan’s making. Whereas the other orphans seem to spring from a place outside the novel, where there is ignorance about gender roles, no rules of proper behavior and a deep love for nature^{xviii}, *Heidi*’s Alp is a physical manifestation of this free, uncorrupted girl’s play world.

It is Miss Rottenmeier, the housekeeper, who is most concerned with rules and good behavior. The role of the female guardian is absent in *Heidi*, but characteristics of this figure are present in Deta and Miss Rottenmeier. Of Heidi, the housekeeper says, ““She thinks of such absurd things that one can hardly mention them in polite society”” (Spyri 137). Though Heidi is seemingly bound by the rules of the household by Miss Rottenmeier, Spyri allows her to break these rules. She can engage in these types of actions because they showcase the wisdom she possesses, disguised by naïveté. This type of wisdom will be discussed more fully in a later section.

Miss Rottenmeier, as will be seen with the guardians of the older orphans, works as Heidi’s foil. With her distaste for the orphan’s behavior, her opinions are exaggerated to show that she is bound by societal standards. Her resistance towards Heidi sets the perfect stage to show the orphan’s effectiveness as Clara’s healer. Spyri shows Clara’s need for healing through a contrast in the girls’ physical descriptions. While Heidi is

“healthy” and “strong” (67) with “red cheeks” (93) running free on the Alp, Clara is “pale” and “thin” (95). These adjectives are important especially in their connection to where these girls “belong”: Heidi, as an orphan, belongs in the unrestricted world of the Alp and Clara, as a daughter, belongs in the comfortable but rigid Sesemann household. As the novel progresses, Heidi shows Clara that, without a mother, she too “belongs” on the Alp.

Heidi brings joy, and eventual healing, to Clara through the very qualities which Miss Rottenmeier disapproves of—the disregard of the rules of the household (and therefore the rules of society). Heidi performs the first “healing” act by breaking the rules, leaving the house and acquiring kittens from a man on the street. Even if she was not an invalid, Clara, as a daughter, would never be permitted such a level of disobedience. Since Heidi presumably does not know any better, her ignorance is rewarded by the positive impact it has on Clara, who, “...held the little kittens in her lap...and played happily with the two graceful creatures” (117). Further, “Clara...enjoyed her companion’s society, for she always did funny things. . . Heidi would entertain her friend with tales of her former life” (Spyri 124). Like the daughter-friends of the older orphans, Clara is drawn to Heidi’s ability to not only do “funny things,” acting outside the rules of normal girls’ behavior, but to tell stories. Where the older orphans imagine their stories, drawing (again) from that world-before-the-novel, from whence they presumably have sprung, Heidi has an actual place from which her stories originate.

Rebecca is unique in the fact that the orphan briefly experiences what it is like to be a daughter. When her mother falls ill, Rebecca goes back to Sunnybrook Farm to help

her family and takes on two months of farm labor and housework. Here Rebecca ironically seems like a “real” orphan—poor, even servant-like, condemned to a life of relative isolation and drudgery. In returning to her mother’s house, Rebecca is temporarily transformed into a daughter and the role is confining. Though the language of these passages, phrases like “two months of steady, fagging work” (319), Wiggin shows the daughter as limited and duty-bound. The figure of the orphan-protagonist reverses what would typically be expected for an orphan and a daughter—the orphan-protagonist excels in school while the daughter must cook, iron and wash.

In Riverboro, Rebecca’s orphan status transforms her poverty, ignorance and obscurity into currency for freedom. Back on Sunnybrook Farm, this currency is gone and her triumph over disadvantage does not benefit her as it did when she was Rebecca-the-orphan. In her mother’s house, she is not extraordinary; she is just the daughter doing a daughter’s tasks. Rebecca was not a character created for this type of life:

“[there was] a beating of wings against the door of the cage, a longing for the freedom of the big world outside . . . She felt as if the wind of destiny were blowing her flame hither and thither, burning, consuming her, but kindling nothing” (Wiggin 321).

She is symbolically held back by her place in her mother’s house, which essentially means that her ambition is indirectly held back by her mother. Living in her mother’s house at the beginning of the novel, Rebecca “. . . was never counted of serious importance, and though considered ‘smart’ and old for her age, she was never thought superior in any way” (Wiggin 27). In Riverboro, as an orphan, Rebecca is recognized as a bright and imaginative leader but the same qualities are not appreciated while she is a daughter on the farm.

Rebecca's sister Hannah Randall seems to exist solely to contrast the orphan. She is the picture of what Rebecca could have been, had Rebecca, sentenced to be a daughter, remained on Sunnybrook Farm. Since Hannah is a daughter by circumstances, Wiggin also makes her a daughter by her qualities: she is, "humdrum" and "limited" and, perhaps most importantly, "her mother's favorite" (26-7). Rebecca would never have been and will never be a daughter because of the personality Wiggin gives her: she is "willful" and "impatient" and "needed nothing but space to develop in," which appears to be space *away* from her mother and home, and "a knowledge of the terms in which to express herself and grew and grew and grew always from within outward" (26).

Thus, before any action occurs in the novel, Hannah and Rebecca are both equipped with exaggerated personality traits to fit who will stay and who will go. Rebecca has been made imaginative and willful by Wiggin because she needs these traits as an orphan out in the world. And because Hannah's fate is to stay in her mother's house, she is made appropriately dull and ordinary: an ignorant farm girl, destined to marry to a farmer and continue farm life.

As a final word on the role of daughter in *Rebecca* and why she has the freedom to be a role model in this way, it is necessary to briefly examine her mother, Aurelia Randall. The text says, "Aurelia could have understood the feeling of a narrow-minded and conventional hen who has brought a strange, intrepid duckling," but, "she could only compare her sensations to those of some quiet brown Dorking who has brooded an ordinary egg and hatched a bird of paradise" (323-4). The language of the passages in which Aurelia examines her "orphan" daughter is almost shocking, considering the fact that normally a mother is thought to guide and encourage her daughter in growth and

development. In Rebecca's case, quite the opposite has happened: her time as an orphan has allowed her to live up to her full potential. Wiggin's language concerning Aurelia with her older daughter is even more extreme:

“Aurelia and Hannah had gone on in the dull round and the common task, growing duller and duller; but now . . . who should appear but this bewildering being, who gave wings to thoughts that had only crept before; who brought color and grace and harmony into the dun-brown texture of existence” (Wiggin 322).

There is no distinction between them, reinforcing that Hannah's potential is to only become her mother. Rebecca, however, has far surpassed Aurelia, whose roles are quite rigidly “mother” and “farm-wife.” Aurelia says, ““I wasn't such much alive as you are, never in the world”” (Wiggin 327). Though Rebecca biologically received life from Aurelia, she is made “alive” by her opportunities as an orphan.

Deirdre Johnson says that one of the “outstanding traits” of these girls is their “imaginative ability...often contrasted with that of their more prosaic friends” (65). In *A Little Princess* other girls are immediately drawn to Sara—“everybody looked at her with wide, interested eyes” (Burnett 14)—because “she was a child full of imaginings and whimsical thoughts” (Burnett 15) and could keep them entertained with tales^{xix}. Rebecca's active imagination finds her leading her friends in plays-- her friends beg her to tell stories (Wiggin 72), just as the girls who surrounded Sara Crewe “drank in” her stories (33)--or pouring her mind out in fiction and essays. Her freedom to imagine is contrasted to Emma Jane, who, “always chose to be the woodsman because she had nothing to do but raise on high an imaginary axe” (52), while Rebecca, “found the woodman's role much too tame for her vaulting ambition” (52).

Emma Jane possesses all the qualities of a perfect daughter: she is angelically beautiful, unimaginative, polite and obedient. To put it simply, she knows her place. She

is drawn to Rebecca, however, because in the face of Rebecca's freedom, Emma Jane, who by societal standards is the ideal little girl, is "dull" (142). Rebecca, in contrast, is described as "brilliant" "bewildering" and "fascinating" (142). What seems to make Emma Jane so uninteresting and unimaginative is the fact that she is a daughter, both of her mother and of society. Trained in the proper ways of being since she was a young child^{xx}, Emma Jane is left with no faculties of innovation: in the same way that she knows her place, she knows no other way to be. During a game of imagination, Emma Jane asks, "'What'll I do with my hands,'" to which Rebecca "wearily" replies, "'Whatever you like . . . you're just a mother—that's all. What does *your* mother do with her hands?'" (Wiggin 53). There is much implied in this exchange: by imitating her mother, Emma Jane is shown to be able only to follow a certain pattern. Not only has the path already been trod, but Rebecca seems to intimate here that being a mother is nothing to strive for. "Just a mother", she says, "that's *all*"—Rebecca's language exposes a dreary cycle here of mother to daughter, a pattern which every girl must follow. While Madeleine Hirsch says that the mother, "must always remain the object in her child's process of subject-formation...never fully a subject" (12) it seems here that both mother and daughter are denied access to being a subject through this cycle. Emma Jane is a daughter; therefore her only option is to be a mother. She is in training to fit the role of mother, and not only *a* mother, but, implied in Rebecca's suggestion, her *own* mother. Meanwhile, Rebecca takes on the imaginatively inventive characters in the game, because she has no one's pattern to follow. Rebecca's ability to imagine allows her to create her own characters in the game, which of course represents the self-creative freedom she has in life.

In *Anne*, self-creation is about creation of her own femininity^{xxi}, shown through a series of contrasts to other female characters in the novel. Diana Barry, Anne's best friend and the main "daughter" in the novel, is used as a contrast to show Anne's ability to imagine. Rarely a chapter goes by in the novel without Anne imagining one thing or another. She says, "Isn't it fortunate I've got such an imagination? . . . It will help me through splendidly, I expect'" (152). Although in context this statement is about Anne coping with a broken arm, it works symbolically to show that Anne's imagination is the source of her intelligence, bravery, wisdom and, like Rebecca, self-creation. Diana's lack of imagination does not just reflect a limited point of view, as it does in Emma Jane: whereas Emma Jane, in her role as a daughter, is symbolically restricted from the ability to imagine, Diana is impeded from imagination because her mother actually condemns it. Anne observes: "Diana has never forgotten the scolding her mother gave her about imagining ghosts into the Haunted Wood. It had a very bad effect on Diana's imagination. It blighted it" (192). Since Mrs. Barry sets out imagining as something that daughters, like Diana, are not allowed to do, Anne's persistence in imagining shows not only her freedom from this specific restriction, but her freedom from what a mother says a girl should be. And since imagination is shown to be the source of Anne's power, the figure of the mother, ironically, is shown to inhibit, rather than guide, the development of a young woman through her "blighting" of this imagination.

It is not just through the blind obedience of the mother's rules, however, that the daughter learns how to become a woman: she "learns" her femininity through the influence and guidance of her mother. Marilla is denied the power to influence Anne because Anne was "born" to Marilla fully formed by Montgomery. Marilla says, "I don't

believe in imagining things different from what they really are...” (50) and again, “I never want to hear you talking in this fashion again. I’ve had my doubts about this imagination of yours right along...I’ll cure you of imagining ghosts into places” (135-6). However, Anne neither stops talking in that “fashion,” nor is she “cured” of imagining. Because Marilla lacks the influence of a mother, Anne is free from the restrictions of a daughter.

For daughters like Diana, though, obedience becomes imitation. Diana says, ““You know there is no such thing as a dryad,”” because Mrs. Barry, “found out about the Haunted Wood and had been decidedly angry over it” (141). Diana not only echoes her mother’s idea and point of view but, “As a *result* Diana had abstained from any further imitative flights of imagination and did not think it prudent to cultivate a spirit of belief even in harmless dryads” (141 emphasis added). Here, Diana’s obedience (her abstinence) turns into her *own* point of view: she “did not think [imagining] prudent.” By becoming her own mother’s voice, she shows her limited potential for development, fulfilling Rebecca’s prophecy for Emma Jane.

Anne is set apart again for her imagining when “handsome” (93) Gilbert Blythe is attracted to her, and not Diana, who is beautiful. After Anne does not give him attention, Gilbert insults her hair and then sincerely apologizes. When Anne refuses to acknowledge him Diana says, ““Oh, how could you, Anne?’...half reproachfully, half admiringly. Diana felt that *she* could never have resisted Gilbert’s plea” (96). Anne doesn’t look at Gilbert because she is too busy imagining. Imagination does not serve here to keep Anne in childhood while other girls are moving into boy-conscious adolescence; rather, if Gilbert serves as a representative of impending marriage then

Anne's imagining represents the fact that she has more options available^{xxii}. There is, for Anne, a distinct lack of societal influence here, especially that of the mother. To put this interaction into its simplest (or perhaps most loaded) terms, it is as if Anne is rejecting the traditional path for girls and pursuing the imagining that the mother forbids.

Diana's beauty, which only grows as she gets older, comes with a price. Similar to Emma Jane, "[Diana] was a very pretty little girl, with her mother's black eyes and hair and rosy cheeks" (74). Unlike Anne, Diana is not allowed to be beautiful *and* smart. When Diana is introduced, Mrs. Barry says, "She reads entirely too much...and I can't prevent her" (74). However, since Mrs. Barry is able to put a stop to all she disapproves of, it can only be assumed that she puts a stop to Diana's constant reading as well. Anne says, "I have to furnish most of the imagination, but I'm well able to do that. Diana is simply perfect in every other way" (Montgomery 79). Montgomery will later show to be untrue: though as a young girl Diana has the manners and beauty that makes her "perfect," Anne is granted "perfection" as a young woman—beauty, brains and poise--because she was able to be free-thinking and imaginative as a child.

It is important to note how the daughter is used as a tool to contrast the mother's ideas with the orphan's. When Anne asks Diana, "Will you swear to be my friend for ever and ever?" Diana "rebukingly" replies, "Why, it's dreadfully wicked to swear," to which Anne answers, "Oh no, not my kind of swearing. There are two kinds, you know" (75). Diana is clearly parroting what she's heard from her parents, presumably her mother. Montgomery seems to suggest that since Anne is ignorant to the fact that swearing is "wicked," she becomes wise in her more broad knowledge that there are two kinds of swearing. This simultaneously implies that Anne has access to a variety of

perspectives, whereas Diana is limited to the view of her parents. This idea of the wisdom in Anne's ignorance will be discussed further in relation to Marilla.

Just as Rebecca could approach Adam Ladd when Emma Jane couldn't, Anne has bravery, and a sense of adventure, that Diana, as a daughter, lacks. Though her most important act of "bravery" is one of social import, Anne is brave in a number of ways. When Diana's little sister is sick with the croup, Anne is advantaged by her disadvantage since she has dealt with the croup before in her life as a "real" orphan. She says to the Barry girls, who have failed to even light a fire, "'it seems to me you might have thought of this before if you'd had any imagination'" (119). Again, imagination equips Anne to deal with things these daughters cannot and she is rewarded for the resulting bravery.

As mentioned above, Anne's greatest moment of bravery is when she crosses the line of "good," socially acceptable behavior. This occurs when Anne and Diana jump on the bed in the Barrys' guest room, to find that Diana's elderly aunt is sleeping in the bed. Diana tells Anne fearfully, "She [Aunt Josephine] is awfully prim and proper and she'll scold dreadfully about this" (128). Diana, growing up in a family household, has been taught to deal with relatives in a certain way—especially Aunt Josephine, for whom it is clear she must be on her best behavior. Anne has had no such upbringing, no training on how to act towards older relatives and therefore does not have the same fear. When Anne approaches Miss Barry to apologize, she distinguishes herself from Diana, saying, "'Diana would have never thought of such a thing... [she] is a very lady-like girl... So you must see how unjust it is to blame her'" (130). Implied in this statement is the fact that *because* Diana is "ladylike," she, lacking imagination, could *not* have "thought of such a thing."

Further, Anne appeals, perhaps unwittingly, to Miss Barry's sympathy:

“If you must be cross with anyone be cross with me. I've been so used in my early days to having people cross at me that I can endure it much better than Diana can...just imagine what you would feel like if you were a little orphan girl who had never had such an honour” (130).

So Anne wins Miss Barry's sympathy through her bravery to approach—conversely Diana is not eligible for sympathy because even if she had to bear something hard, Montgomery makes it clear that she would not do it bravely^{xxiii}. Miss Barry says, “I've made up my mind to stay simply for the sake of getting better acquainted with that Anne-girl...She amuses me, and at my time of life an amusing person is a rarity” (130). The fact that Anne is “amusing” to Miss Barry suggests how Anne is amusing to readers as well—she is a different kind of character, refreshing and unconventional. And as happens so often in this novel, the declaration of Anne being amusing implies that Diana the daughter is *not*. Because Anne “amuses” Miss Barry in this first encounter, she gains rewards in material goods, like kid slippers, and thrilling experiences, like attending the theater and eating ice cream in a restaurant. Sanders says, “These girls... [improve] the lives of the adults who are sympathetic to them... [and gain] material and social comfort for themselves” (42).

In *Daddy Long Legs*, “freedom” from the role of daughter is not always a good thing. Jerusha is keenly aware of the differences between herself and her two “daughter” friends, Sallie and Julia, who “...have both had things from the time they were babies” (237). She writes,

“It's different with me than with other girls. They can take things naturally from people. They have fathers and brothers and aunts and uncles; but I can't be on any such relations with any one...I'm alone, really—with my back to the wall fighting the world...” (146).

In this rare moment, Jerusha expresses the true disadvantage in being an orphan; however, the statement's validity is undermined by the fact that Jerusha is neither "alone" nor "fighting," but enjoying all the friends, experiences and material comforts that any well-to-do college girl would. Jerusha's freedom from the role of daughter comes from her *self*-exemption from expectations. She writes, "...you can't expect me to have any manners; a foundling asylum isn't a young ladies finishing school" (Webster 36). Her excuse for being "impertinent" and "ungrateful" is that she was "badly brought up" (69). Again, Jerusha verbalizes what the other orphans imply with their actions. She is fully conscious of the fact that she can act and speak more freely than "daughters" because nothing is expected of her.

Leadership

Because these girls have do not follow their mothers as role models, they become role models themselves^{xxiv}. While living under her Aunt Miranda's roof, the only rules Rebecca has are those which she herself sees fit to enforce. Wiggin makes it clear that Rebecca's "standard to be good" is "self-imposed" (64) and not due to anything she learns from her duty-bound Aunt Miranda. In this way, Rebecca automatically becomes a leader. Her first teacher, Miss. Dearborn, says to her "You started all the others...Whatever you do they all do, whether you laugh, or miss, or write notes, or ask to leave the room, or drink and it must be stopped" (60). Rebecca's endearing and naïve breaches in classroom etiquette are not as acceptable when then come from her parented classmates. When Miss Dearborn addresses the class, she says, "I daresay I ought to have punished you [all] for following her example, not her for setting it" (59). And though Rebecca's actions in the classroom seem more disobedient than subversive, this

scene, especially highlighted by Miss Dearborn's language, symbolizes Rebecca's larger power and freedom to do what other girls cannot—in essence, to lead where no girl can follow.

Anne is a well-liked leader amongst her friends as well. Like Sara and Rebecca, her creativity and imagination give her natural leadership: she directs her friends in plays and stars in them; begins a story club and succeeds as its best writer. “Self-possession” (217) is an adjective often associated with Anne, because she can create herself in ways other girls cannot. Not only is she allowed to choose who she learns from but what she learns, in relation to becoming a woman. McQuillan and Pfeiffer point out that “Anne questions some rules while at the same time she seeks to accommodate other gender requirements” (28). But her freedom is not as much in what she chooses to follow but in the fact that she has the choice to question. Anne may choose to shed some actions seen as bad but not those that are seen as foolish or frivolous: this is the essence of her freedom because girls with a mother, in these novels, do not *need* to look to a variety of women and therefore do not have this choice.

It is worth mentioning here one female character who carries the traits of a role model. This is Rebecca's smart, insightful high school teacher Miss Maxwell. In contrast to Rebecca, however, Miss Maxwell is only successful according to the “rules” of society: she is smart because she is educated. Rebecca, endowed with the faculties of her mind and spirit because she is an orphan-protagonist, is not restricted to knowledge through education. And Miss Maxwell knows this, hinting at it when Rebecca expresses anxiety that she will not become a good writer for lack of educational opportunities: she says, “a little scornfully,” (or perhaps, jealously) that Rebecca should instead, “be

afraid...that you won't realize the beauty of the outer world; that you may lack sympathy...that your faculty of expression may not keep pace with your ideas" (275). What is interesting to note here is the fact that these are all qualities Rebecca has been shown explicitly to possess. Whether she is reveling in the ecstasy of nature's beauty, helping the poverty-stricken Simpson family or expressing her abounding imagination through poetry, Rebecca is equipped with these most important qualities that Miss Maxwell implies cannot be taught, rendering her own influence somewhat impotent.

Ignorant wisdom

Just as the early 20th century orphan's absence of a mother allows her to imagine, it gives her the "gift" of naïveté as well. This naïveté equips the orphan with what I am going to call an "ignorant wisdom." I am using this term to describe the innate wisdom that is in orphans, derived from the fact that they do not know generally accepted ideas: the orphans lack basic knowledge that daughters receive from their mothers.

In *Heidi* the orphan's aunt, Deta, expresses concern for Heidi's "ignorant" state, acting, as I argued earlier, as a representative for Heidi's late mother. She says to the grandfather, "Don't I know how old she is; eight years old and ignorant of everything. They have told me that you refuse to send her to church and to school'" (Spyri 89). Church and school, here, are not only used as a synonym for "everything," but are in fact the two places where the orphan's ignorant wisdom is best showcased. Deta alone recognizes these shortcomings in Heidi's upbringing; she manifests the anxiety of a mother but as an aunt, is impotent to remedy this ignorance on her own. Though she is not Heidi's guardian, Deta, like Anne's Marilla or Rebecca's Aunt Miranda, compares Heidi against the standards of what a "good girl" should be. In reality, Deta's statement

acts as a foil for what the reader knows to be true: at the time of this accusation Heidi is not yet exposed to church and school, but the claim that Heidi is ignorant of “everything” only shows Deta’s own ignorance of how extraordinary Heidi is naturally.

Ignorant wisdom is one tool used by Spyri to portray the child as a healer. Heidi, though a child, acts autonomously: in other words, it is not her mother who exhorts her to be kind to others in order to be a good little girl. Heidi chooses to heal through her own agency. Barbara and Richmond Almond say, “Heidi is an idealized child, positive and spontaneous... [and] simply lives her life...optimistic about the world” (126, 128). This combination of being unself-conscious, seemingly unaware that there is any other way to act *but* do heal people in this way, and yet simultaneously and solely self-driven to perform these acts, can only be achieved by the orphan. The first person who is healed by Heidi is Peter’s poverty-stricken grandmother who says, “I hope she’ll come again; she has done me so much good. . . I have something to look forward to in this world now, thank God!” (Spyri 77-8). Heidi herself appears to have neither emotional nor material needs, reinforcing this suggestion that she is otherworldly-- endowed with everything necessary from the moment she enters the novel.

Heidi also changes the “gruff” grandfather through her “charm, curiosity and excitement about life” (Almond and Almond 126). She not only heals him, but shows him how to help and heal as well. Once a hardened old man, he says at Heidi’s return, “. . . I am more happy than I deserve. . . God has been good to me, to send you back” (Spyri 193). It is important that the grandfather mention God, as it is Heidi who leads him back to his religion. Where the local pastor attempts this same thing and fails, Heidi succeeds by simply reading the story of the prodigal son^{xxv}.

As a note, Heidi is taught about God by Clara's grandmama, one of the privileged adults in these novels that the orphans *choose* to take guidance from. This is important because, again, Heidi has no single source of teaching—she does not have a mother to tell her, “this is what you do when someone sad or confused or poor.” Heidi must pick up guidance from different people, situations and experiences. While the older girls are able to create what it means to be a “girl” in more adolescent years, Heidi, remaining a child, is primarily an orphan healer and so self-creates in this way as well.

Just as Heidi can accomplish what the pastor could not, so she also succeeds where the doctor fails. When the doctor has no hope for Clara to walk again, she is taken up to the Alp to be with Heidi. Once Clara is apart from her “beautiful house,” and “comfortable rolling-chair” (95), Heidi shows her the freedom of basking in the sun of the Alp, enjoying its wild flowers and goat's milk, instead of learning lessons under Mr. Candidate the tutor. Clara is also freed from her household, especially the watchful eye of Miss Rottenmeier. She is permitted to stay on the Alp by her grandmama, who, like Deta, is another less-powerful version of a mother. Though the grandmama possesses the love and some of the guidance of a mother, she is not bound to stay with Clara as a mother might be. She is also the paternal grandmother of Clara, so she is not only removed a generation but is identified with the relatively detached *father*, Mr. Sesemann, instead of being a type of stand-in for the late Mrs. Sesemann. When Heidi teaches Clara to walk, she is symbolically freeing her from the confines of daughter-hood. Even more, Heidi heals Clara by making Clara like her. (Just as when she shows Clara the Alp as a home, she is showing her how to take advantage of her freedom as an orphan.) Whereas in the beginning Clara and Heidi are differentiated through their physical appearances, Spyri

shows Clara's transformation into a walking girl, now autonomous, infinitely freer than in that "beautiful house" with its "comfortable rolling-chair," through her physical likening to Heidi. The text says, "... Heidi slipped from the bench [with] Clara, taking her arm. . . Upright and firm, Clara walked beside her friend. When they came back *their rosy faces* beamed" (Spyri 295, emphasis added).

Finally, in this same way, Heidi also succeeds where the teacher has failed. Because Spyri has thus far established Heidi as a healer, or one who ministers to the needs of those around her, the reader is now asked to accept the fact that Heidi's method of teaching is superior over the village schoolteacher. After the once illiterate Peter reads confidently to class, the teacher questions, "'What miracle has happened to you . . .? 'For a long time I tried to teach you with all my patience. . . I had given you up as hopeless. . .'" to which Peter replies, "'It was Heidi'" (250). As the language here suggests, Heidi is able to take "hopeless" cases throughout the novel—the blind grandmother, crippled Clara, illiterate Peter-- and, through the simple, "ignorant" belief, that they can be helped, is then specially enabled by Spyri to help them.

Pollyanna's ability to heal also comes through a type of "ignorance." The first way she heals the residents in Beldingsville is by teaching them how to live. This inherently implies that *she* knows how, with her ignorant "why-it's-so-easy-all-you-have-to-do-is-be-glad" attitude. She says, "'Oh, Aunt Polly, Aunt Polly, I reckon I am glad this morning just to be alive!'" (Porter 30). In another exchange with her aunt, Pollyanna is not just appreciative but deceptively wise:

"Oh but Aunt Polly...you haven't left me any time at all just to—to live' ... 'To live child! What do you mean? As if you weren't living all the time!' 'Oh of course I'd be *breathing* all the time I was doing those things, Aunt Polly, but I

wouldn't be living. You breathe all the time you're asleep but you aren't living.'" (Porter 36)

Pollyanna's knowledge of "how to live," is a part of this other-worldliness of the child orphan. She says, "I don't think you have to *learn* how to live. I didn't, anyhow" (Porter 96). The town doctor, Dr. Chilton, correctly "diagnoses" the source of Pollyanna's knowledge of living. "As near as I can find out it is an overwhelming, unquenchable gladness for everything that has happened or is going to happen...I wish I could prescribe her—and buy her—as I would a box of pills..." and identifies her as not just a healer but *that which heals*, saying, "...that little girl is better than a six-quart bottle of tonic any day..." (Porter 91). Porter shows the effectiveness of Pollyanna's brand of "living" through the healing of the doctor himself.

Pollyanna tells Dr. Chilton, "...you're *helping* it [the suffering]—don't you see?—and of course you're glad to help it! And so that makes you the gladdest of any of us, all the time" (96). Here, Pollyanna is truly ignorant of what it means to be a doctor—what it is like to witness suffering on the level Chilton does—but Porter manipulates this ignorance, through Chilton's reaction to the words, to seem like wisdom: "He knew, too, that never again would a long day's work or a long night's weariness be quite without that new found exaltation that had come to him through Pollyanna's eyes" (Porter 96). Note the language of this quote: Dr. Chilton essentially finds worth in his profession and life through Pollyanna's view of who he is—through "Pollyanna's eyes"—and how she thinks he should live^{xxvi}.

Because Porter has endowed her orphan with this "knowledge of living," the author fulfills Pollyanna's proclamations over those who need healing. In other words, she heals those who are hurting by proclaiming them to be what she assumes they are and

as a result, they become this way. Alice Mills says, “Eventually...Pollyanna’s naïve trust becomes justified retrospectively—or to put it rather differently, her own unconscious manipulation succeeds” (93), and later, “Porter’s Pollyanna is both victim and expert manipulator, under the guise of the innocently loving child” (103). The most prominent recipient of this kind of healing is the eccentric, wealthy loner John Pendleton who, “...never speaks ter anybody...” (55). Pollyanna approaches him with an innocent bravery that comes from her “removed-from-society” background and declares, “I’m sure you’re much nicer than you look!” (54). When Pollyanna assumes that Pendleton’s money-hoarding is “for the heathen,” Pendleton later fulfills this “prophesy” with her guidance by using his money to care for the orphaned Jimmy, the “little Indian boy” (86) in Beldingsville. At another time, Pollyanna observes, “But you’re only cross *outside*—you aren’t cross inside a bit...” because she observes him tenderly petting his dog. She says, “It’s funny how dogs and cats know the insides of folks better than other folks do isn’t it?” (83). Of course, the natural wisdom of animals, though inaccessible to “other folks,” is available to Pollyanna.

Another way Pollyanna heals John Pendleton, or, more accurately, reveals and creates him, is through answering questions in a literal way “...as was her habit” (80). When she hears Pendleton has skeletons in his closet she takes it literally, saying “...a nice live little boy [would] be better than that old dead skeleton you keep somewhere...” (132), to which he replies, “Pollyanna, I suspect you are right—more right than you know...In fact I *know* that a ‘nice live little boy’ would be far better than—my skeleton in the closet” (132). Porter structures various instances so that the literal answers are the most insightful ones. Additionally, this way of answering questions charms Pendleton

and the others she heals to see things her way, just as she transforms them to be who she sees them to be.

Aunt Polly, Pollyanna's aunt who dislikes the orphan from the start, is the final and greatest product of this orphan's healing through ignorant wisdom. Even more than John Pendleton, Polly is "created" by her niece^{xxvii}. Pollyanna, unwittingly refusing to bow to the social standards of her aunt, continues with her own "standard" of gladness. After she forbids Pollyanna to speak of her father, Pollyanna thinks,

"...I-I reckon I'm glad she doesn't want to talk about Father...it'll be easier, maybe—if I don't talk about him. Probably, anyhow, that is why she told me not to talk about him. And Pollyanna, convinced anew of her aunt's 'kindness,' blinked off the tears..." (Porter 18).

Pollyanna does not expose hidden motives of kindness in her aunt but creates an idea of who Polly is. And though it would seem that Pollyanna's "inability to apprehend reality indicates a serious mental imbalance" (Cadogan and Craig 100), Porter makes it so that Pollyanna's *idea* of her aunt is who she becomes.

The softening of Miss Polly begins when she acts like the Aunt Polly that Pollyanna assumes and expects her to be. The narrator describes it as, "the curious helpless feeling that had been hers so often since Pollyanna's arrival..." (67). Pollyanna's knowledge, disguised as ignorance to the fact that her aunt could be anything else *other* than kind, is almost disconcerting in its certainty. She says, "Of course I knew...that you wouldn't let a dear little lonesome kitty go hunting for a home..." (67), and "Why, my Aunt Polly is the nicest lady in the world..." (70). Both statements are clearly untrue, but because Pollyanna "ignorantly" and confidently makes them, they forecast Aunt Polly's transformation.

This transformation becomes self-conscious when Pollyanna gets hurt, signaled by the fact that Polly begins to “[wear] her hair [up] every day now—jest ter please that blessed child!” (155). Since Pollyanna is not strong enough in her gladness to perpetuate how her aunt should be on her own, the author has Polly fulfill Pollyanna’s expectations to show the true wisdom of the orphan’s ignorance. Polly comes up against her *own* ignorance, especially with regards to the people of Beldingsville. When a woman with “unnaturally pink cheeks” and “abnormally yellow hair” (173) whose family Pollyanna visited with, comes to the Harrington home, Polly is loath to even have the woman under her roof. The woman says, ““She [Pollyanna] didn’t know, I suspect that her kind of folks don’t generally call on my kind. Maybe if they *did* call more, Miss Harrington, there wouldn’t be so many—of my kind...” (173). Polly, raised within society and exposed to the norms of social hierarchy, is limited to a certain, conventional view, whereas Pollyanna, because of convenient ignorance of class distinctions and social parameters, can easily disregard them-- and because of this disregard, she is shown, by Porter, to be wise.

While Pollyanna cannot transfer her freedom and power to move outside of societal boundaries to her aunt, since it is inherent to the orphan-protagonist, her aunt is transformed through an understanding that the orphan is superior in her viewpoint. Polly has no access to freedom except through her appreciation and imitation of Pollyanna. Following her niece’s example to the woman with the yellow hair, Polly “stepped forward and held out her hand” (174). In Polly’s recognition that Pollyanna’s way of living is the right way, she ascribes even more power to the orphan, saying, ““.....the

whole town is wonderfully happier—and all because of one little girl who taught the people a new game and how to play it” (178).

For Rebecca and Anne, ignorant wisdom functions not as much to heal—though it is the source of Marilla’s transformation in *Anne*—but more to show the freedom of thought available to the orphans in comparison with other female characters. Since they know nothing, they are therefore free to make “untainted” observations. For Rebecca, the most effective instance of this is her discussion of missionaries with Emma Jane. Rebecca says she does not feel called to be a missionary because she does not want to teach people, “how to live, when I haven’t learned myself” (262). This bothers Emma Jane, who is concerned there will be no one to “save” the “heathens” (262). Rebecca continues confidently that God will meet the heathens where they are and will be just, knowing their situations. Emma Jane attempts to thwart her by asking, “what if they die first?” but Rebecca’s ideology has considered that as well and she answers her friend, “with a comfortable theology” (263). Here, the argument between Rebecca and Emma Jane shows the innate wisdom that Rebecca has been endowed with through her ignorance of the teachings of the church. The conversation is set up to show the closed-mindedness and almost downright foolishness of the church teachings through the well-trained voice of Emma Jane in contrast with the honest, untaught, innocent reasoning of Rebecca (and reasoning that is more consistent with the fundamentals of the Christian faith).

Porter has Pollyanna question religion in a similar way by setting her up against the town’s most “religious” women, the Ladies Aide of Beldingsville. Her pure understanding of the purpose of the church, passed down from her father in relative isolation, is privileged in its contrast to the corrupt, socially entangled religious practice

of the Ladies Aide. She asks their help in finding a home for Jimmy, but they cannot because, “It seemed that their society was famous for its offerings to Hindu missions, and several said they should die of mortification if it should be less this year” (Porter 77-8). Pollyanna then consciously discredits her own wisdom which exaggerates her ignorance and makes it all the more effective to the reader:

“Some of what was said at this time Pollyanna again thought she could not have understood too, for it sounded almost as if they did not care at all what the money *did* so long as the sum opposite the name of their society in a certain ‘report’ ‘headed the list’—and of course that could not be what they meant at all!” (Porter 78)

Pollyanna’s mind cannot seem to comprehend that which is not good, assuming always that everyone’s intentions are best. Because of this, her own intentions and viewpoints seem all the more pure. She says, “‘Not but that it’s good, to send money to heathen...But they acted as if little boys *here* weren’t any account—only little boys ’way off. I should *think*, though, they’d rather see Jimmy Bean grow—than just a report!’” (78). Her simple logic, against the “confusion” of the Ladies Aide meeting, shows the freedom Pollyanna has through a childhood separated from society

For Anne, just as her imagination, contrasted against Diana, plays a part in her self-creation of what it means to be feminine, her ignorant wisdom, contrasted against Marilla Cuthbert and Rachel Lynde, functions in the same way. In a 1911 journal entry, Montgomery reveals that “poor Marilla” is neither “very intelligent” nor “broad-minded” because, “...those qualities I put into Marilla...to furnish a background for Anne” (289). Every situation is constructed so that Anne’s views are contrasted against the *true* ignorance of Marilla. By true ignorance, I mean that, unlike Anne, Marilla does not have

access to any point of view except what society tells her. Further, “society,” in Marilla’s case, is quite limited, considering she has spent her entire life in a small village.

Marilla remains perpetually puzzled by Anne; the more rules and standards she sets, the more of a chance there is for Anne to question and stretch and break these standards and rules. Marilla has had to be practical and her practicality comes up against Anne’s freedom of thought numerous times in the novel. When Anne brings in “gorgeous boughs” from outside to decorate her bedroom, Marilla, perplexed and disgruntled as ever, says, ““You clutter up your room entirely too much with out of doors stuff...Bedrooms were made to sleep in.”” Anne replies, “Oh and dream in too, Marilla” (101). The narrator helps here by adding that Marilla’s “aesthetic sense was not noticeably developed” (101). Marilla’s socially imposed conventionality has made her practical, almost ascetic. Because Anne is not necessarily a functioning member of society, because presumably she has never had her own bedroom (and never decorated it), she is not confined by “bedrooms are made to sleep in”; she has a realm of possibilities available to her because she has had no precedent. Even in this slight discrepancy on points of view, the dichotomy is drawn between the women who must live in the confined to the viewpoints of society and the orphan-protagonist, with no set place in society, free to make her own rules even when it comes to decorating the bedroom.

Like Rebecca’s, Anne’s ignorant wisdom is best portrayed through her views on religious matters. Once Marilla decides to keep Anne, the first order of business is for the orphan to learn to say her prayers. Marilla says, ““you must kneel down,” to which Anne replies, “Why must people kneel down to pray? If I really wanted to pray I’ll tell you

what I'd do. I'd go out into a great big field all alone or into the deep, deep woods and I'd look up into the sky...And then I'd just *feel* a prayer." After,

"Marilla felt more embarrassed than ever. She had intended to teach Anne the childish classic, 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' But ...it suddenly occurred to her that that simple little prayer...was entirely unsuited to this freckled witch of a girl..." (Montgomery 47).

Though insightful in its simplicity, Montgomery does not as much use Anne's idea of prayer to show her wisdom as she does its contrast to Marilla's limited view. Marilla's embarrassment is the hint that Anne does, in fact, have a significant understanding of what prayer should be. This understanding is specifically because she has not been *told* what prayer should be, whether from a mother or a minister, and therefore goes about prayer in the way that seems right to her. In another instance concerning religion, Marilla says, "If you'll be a good girl...you should never find it hard to say your prayers," to which Anne says, "Saying one's prayers isn't exactly the same thing as praying" (67). Here Marilla equates a "good girl" with the ability to say prayers, and what is implied is that a little girl should not question the need to "say [her] prayers." Anne's language uncovers the action as perfunctory; a duty or obligation rather than a spiritual experience.

Further conversations about religion reflect Anne's widening of Marilla's perspectives and the older woman's consequent confusion—how easily her views are questioned and dismantled by Anne! When Anne expresses her disappointment in Jesus looking sorrowful in a painting Marilla says, "You shouldn't talk that way...it's irreverent" to which Anne replies, "Why, I felt just as reverent as could be. I'm sure I didn't mean to be irreverent." Marilla, suddenly unsure, answers, "... Well I don't suppose you did-- but it doesn't sound right to talk so familiarly about such things" (51). Marilla's accusation of irreverence rests on the fact that Anne's statement "doesn't sound

right,” implying both that this belief is not born of her own conviction and that it has little merit in and of itself. So Marilla is not only limited in her viewpoint but, because it was presumably imposed on her in her upbringing, it is one she does not fully understand.

Anne’s observations are not the only important action here. The very fact that she questions these accepted religious norms shows a naïveté which brings freedom. The language of the first quote-- the fact that she sees the “childish” prayer as “unsuited” to Anne—is the beginning of Marilla’s comprehension of Anne’s wisdom, a comprehension which is subtly hinted at throughout the novel. Again, it is not just what Anne says that affects Marilla, but the fact that she says it. It exposes an underlying resistance in Marilla against the society which restricts her on so many levels. Montgomery even appears to be suggesting that if this sort of resistance is present in Marilla then it is beneath the surface in all women. The narrator reveals,

“Some of the things Anne had said, especially about the minister’s sermons...were what she [Marilla] herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years, but had never given expression to. It almost seemed to her that those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible and accusing shape and form in the person of this outspoken morsel of neglected humanity”(Montgomery 72).

In Marilla’s comprehension and acknowledgment of Anne’s wisdom comes her capacity to change, though she remains outwardly tied to her beliefs, both religious and societal, for a good part of the novel.

Like religious norms, the authenticity of social standards is put into question through Anne’s ignorant wisdom. Specifically, Anne has a difficult time not speaking her mind, especially when it comes to unpleasant people:

“‘She [Mrs. Blewett] looks exactly like a—like a gimlet.’ Marilla smothered a smile under the conviction that Anne must be reproved for such a speech. ‘A little

girl like you should be ashamed of talking so about a lady and a stranger...Sit down...and behave as a good girl should” (Montgomery 44).

Here, Anne is free to speak her mind, never having been taught better. It is up to Marilla to teach her how to “behave as a good girl should.” However, Marilla’s “smothered” smile is the give-away to Montgomery’s intent: Anne’s words are those Marilla suppresses (and not only Marilla but the women she represents). In this light, Anne is not so much mischievous but innocent in her truthfulness. Marilla’s smile implies that Anne’s words reflect the older woman’s instinctive thoughts; Anne’s naïveté becomes freedom, as she has the space to express these thoughts while Marilla does not.

The “innocence” of truthful speech is important with regards to Mrs. Rachel Lynde who, “...prided herself on always speaking her mind” (12). As the eyes and ears of Avonlea, Rachel Lynde has an opinion about everything that happens in the village. Though this quality gains her respect in the community, she is not particularly well-liked. Montgomery guides the reader on how to view Rachel Lynde through tongue-in-cheek commentary, saying she is “not overburdened with perception...” (64) and, “one of those delightful and popular people who pride themselves on speaking their mind without fear or favour” (57). The interesting thing about Rachel Lynde is that she enjoys a relative amount of power^{xxviii}: she is a leader in all the community’s social activities and her husband even goes by “Rachel Lynde’s husband” (8). However, when Rachel Lynde speaks her mind it is not always appreciated by her neighbors. She is often shown to be a nosy, blunt, foolish and overbearing—especially when she is “truthful” about Anne’s looks and insults her hair and freckles. The fact that neither narrator nor characters appreciate Mrs. Rachel’s honesty shows again the unique position of the orphan: when Anne speaks her mind, she is rewarded by the narrator (author) as appearing wise.

The difference comes down to the fact that Rachel Lynde should know better but Anne does not. Though this is partly because Anne is young, Marilla makes clear that a “good girl” does not act this way. As an orphan-protagonist, Anne will grow up continuing to speak her mind, but will never become Rachel Lynde. So, Rachel Lynde does not reflect the grown-up Anne but rather a version of Marilla: a Marilla who chooses to speak honestly instead of repressing her words. What Rachel Lynde says when she speaks her mind is mean-spirited and conventional, but Anne’s innocence not only softens her words but allows her to say them. So, in an important way, though Anne is offering Marilla a type of awakening, Marilla will never be able to fully step into this breach of social norms. Anne’s honesty becomes wisdom but because Marilla has always *known* the proper way to act in society-- as a daughter, sister, church-member, and farm-owner--she is denied access to appearing wise. Instead, Rachel Lynde is used to showcase the unpleasant embodiment of what Marilla would be with the same honesty. When Marilla begins to soften, putting up less resistance to Anne’s unconventional, “ignorant” actions, words and points of view, Rachel Lynde becomes the foil to Anne instead:

“Mrs. Lynde says she once heard a minister confess that when he was a boy he stole a strawberry tart out of his aunt’s pantry and she never had any respect for that minister again... I’d have thought what an encouraging thing it would be for small boys nowadays who do naughty things and are sorry for them...”
(Montgomery 171).

This instance is another classic example of Anne’s wisdom-- except that here she is an adolescent, not a child. In previous instances, like the ones concerning prayer, Montgomery teaches the reader that Anne’s ignorance has made her wise. However, contrasted with Rachel Lynde’s limited insight, Anne’s wisdom seems still inherent but

no longer ignorant—instead, Montgomery can now endow her with a broader perspective than the older woman, one which the reader has no reason to question.

In *Anne* and *Rebecca*, as the girls get older, the novels' narrators give up the pretense of ignorant wisdom. Instead there is an open acknowledgment of their superiority. For *Rebecca*, this happens in high school, as the narrator explains, "She was a lifegiver, altering the whole scheme of any picture she made a part of, by *contributing new values*. Have you never seen the dull blues and greens of a room changed, transfigured by a burst of sunshine? That seemed to Miss Maxwell the effect of Rebecca on the groups of people with whom they now and then mingled" (273, emphasis added). The language here leaves no room for doubt that Rebecca's ideas go from being different to better.

When this change occurs for Anne, the transformation of Marilla becomes more apparent as well: "The child she had learned to love had vanished somehow and here was this tall, serious-eyed girl of fifteen with the thoughtful brows and the proudly poised head in her place. Marilla loved the girl as much as she had loved the child..." (204). Once Anne grows into a socially acceptable, indeed socially esteemed young woman, Marilla can appreciate the way through which she became this way—namely, her "free" adolescence. Note Marilla's exchange with Rachel Lynde, who says,

"There's a good deal of the child about her yet in some ways" "There's a good deal more of a woman about her in others' retorted Marilla, with a momentary return of her old crispness. But crispness was no longer Marilla's distinguishing characteristic" (Montgomery 243)

Later, Rachel Lynde tells her husband "Marilla Cuthbert has got *mellow*..." (243). This quote is not so much about what Anne is or is not; in fact Anne remains here both childlike in her freedom, while developing into an unconventional and remarkable young

woman. Instead, it is about Marilla's recognition about the kind of woman that growing up as an orphan-protagonist produces and in this recognition, the admission that, if Anne was doing things right, she, Marilla, has had the wrong views all along.

As an older teen, Anne becomes a sort of role model to Marilla, just as Pollyanna becomes a sort of role model to her aunt: "Marilla would have given much just then to have possessed Anne's power of putting her feelings into word; but nature and habit had willed it otherwise..." (220). Marilla does not have access to freedom on her own but through Anne's guidance of what she should be: though she remains bound by "nature" and "habit," her transformation is that she becomes the loving, proud guardian who Anne desired from the start. Margaret Atwood says, "Anne is the catalyst who allows...Marilla...to finally express her long-buried softer human emotions" (n.p.). It could even be said that Anne knew who Marilla was inside all along—thus, it is not so much of a transformation as a realization.

Rebecca shares this kind of change in the older guardian through Aunt Jane, the softer of Rebecca's two aunts, who admits, "I only wish I'd known how to take a little of my foolishness along with me, as some folks do, to brighten my declining years" (Wiggin 69). In a moment of insightfulness, she says about Rebecca,

"I don't think she's like the rest of us...but whether it's for the better or the worse I can't hardly tell till she grows up. She's got the making of most anything in her, Rebecca has; but I feel sometimes as if we were not fitted to cope with her" (Wiggin 120).

Jane astutely notes that the aunts, as guardians, are not fitted to cope with Rebecca because she is a different kind of creature, with notably more potential than they. She also holds Rebecca as a type of role model: "The habit of speaking her mind freely was certainly growing on Jane to an altogether terrifying extent" (Wiggin 121). Speaking

freely is unmistakably the mark of Rebecca's influence. The text says, "while Jane was puzzled, she was also attracted" (Wiggin 173-4). Like Marilla, Jane takes some of her orphan's freedom, in this case the freedom of speaking her mind, but can only translate it so far.

Ignorance means an entirely different thing for Jerusha Abbot. Because she is older and has spent so much time as a "real" orphan, Jerusha is more self-conscious of her unique position and consequently becomes more self-aware of its advantages. She writes, "'At least homesickness is one disease that I've escaped! I never heard of anyone being asylumsick...'" (28), and "Usually Freshman can't get singles...but I got one without even asking. I suppose the registrar didn't think it would be right to ask a properly brought-up girl to room with a foundling. You see there are advantages!" (26). Whereas at the beginning of the novel she is aware of how her ignorance holds her back, as the novel continues Jerusha recognizes the power in her awareness and how it gives her access to freedom.

Both within the novel and as an orphan-protagonist, Jerusha has a lot of catching up to do. She writes, "I read just plain books—I have to, you know, because there are eighteen blank years behind me" (46). Though Jerusha *is* relatively bright, her greatest asset is her "eighteen blank years." In other words, at the time the novel begins, Jerusha is a ready vessel for Webster to fill with material wealth, and all that goes with it, the admiration of friends and teachers, and an overall advantageous college experience fitted to offer everything a young woman could want. Seelye asserts Jerusha is, "in a continuous intellectual ecstasy once she leaves the orphan asylum," and continues to say

that her only trouble (which can hardly be counted as such) seems to be the only-irritating dominance of Daddy Long Legs (338).

As Jerusha becomes aware of her advantages as an orphan, she appears also to become strangely aware of Webster's manipulation to orchestrate her beneficial circumstances. She writes, "I'm happiest of all... [because] I'm not anybody's nurse-maid or typewriter or bookkeeper (I should have been, you know, except for you)" (82), and though she addresses this statement to Daddy Long Legs, it can fittingly be applied to Webster as well. She writes again, "I am getting such a lot of good things here; it wouldn't be fair to get them here-after, too" (136). As the novel continues and Jerusha's "good things" increase, her statements become almost meta-fictional in their self-awareness: "It's a dizzying experience, Daddy, to pass eighteen years in the John Grier Home, and then suddenly to be plunged into the WORLD" (142), and "My childhood was just a long, sullen stretch of revolt and now I am so happy every moment of the day that I can't believe it's true. *I feel like a made-up heroine in a story book*" (147 emphasis added).

Jerusha's freedom, then, does not come from ignorance, but from her self-consciousness and in this self-consciousness, the ability to create herself. At first, she "creates" herself because she has to, changing her name to Judy--"It's sort of too bad, isn't it, to have to give yourself the only pet name you ever had?" (33) With the name change from Jerusha, the tombstone-named orphan, to Judy who is "spoiled" and "romps her way through life without any cares" (33), she is then free to become that person—she sets her own expectations and then fulfills them. She is confident of the "kind of

character” that she is “going to develop” (79). Consider the departure, in this self-conscious self-creation, from the other orphans in her statement about religion:

“Their [the Semples] God (whom they have inherited intact from their remote Puritan ancestors) is narrow, irrational, unjust, mean, revengeful, bigoted Person. Thank heaven I don’t inherit any God from anybody! *I am free to make mine up as I wish Him.* He’s kind and sympathetic and imaginative and forgiving and understanding—and He has a sense of humor” (Webster 103 emphasis added).

In this way, then Jerusha perhaps has the most power of all the orphan-protagonists.

Conclusion

“When I first came to college I felt quite resentful because I’d been robbed of the normal kind of childhood that the other girls had; but now, I don’t feel that way in the least. I regard it as a very unusual adventure. It gives me a vantage point from which to stand aside and look at life. Emerging full grown, I get a perspective on the world that other people who have been brought up in the thick of things, entirely lack” (Webster 270-1).

The fate of the orphan-protagonist final product, that is, the young women that Rebecca, Anne and Jerusha become, is perhaps best put by McQuillan and Pfeiffer in their discussion of *Anne*: “The novel is a not a feminist Utopia: no option other than conventional womanhood is open to Anne, but we can read the novel in a way that helps us see the creation of Anne-the-woman as an active visible project” (28). So, while the girls who grow up cannot exert the same kind of freedom they had as orphan-protagonist children, it is this active making of their womanhood that remains the lasting mark of their youth as privileged orphans. In the end of both *Heidi* and *Pollyanna*, everyone around the orphan has transformed while she, unchanged, remains as free as the moment she came into the novel—and with the recognition of her significance, she will have space to develop. It is understood in these novels that self-creation cannot continue into adulthood, since adulthood is practically synonymous with marriage for all three girls and thus their entrance into conventionality. However, growing up as an orphan-protagonist who operates outside social boundaries and gender roles, these girls make the best use of

their pre-marriage freedom by gaining desirable men. Indeed, these men become attracted to them through some particular orphan-protagonist quality—for Rebecca it is bravery, for Anne it is intelligence and for Jerusha, her general disadvantage and lack^{xxix}. Still, the orphan-protagonist is at her most powerful during her development—and she lives on, in these novels, in that perpetual state of disadvantaged freedom.

ⁱ Hirsch, 47

ⁱⁱ Melanie Kimball, in her article “From Folktales to Fiction,” says that orphans, innately, are characters that allow for reinvention because they have not been influenced by parents.

ⁱⁱⁱ Deidre Johnson, in her article “Community and Character,” cites Nancy Romalov’s article “Modern, Mobile and Marginal: American Girls’ Series Fiction, 1905-1925,” in calling *Pollyanna*, *Anne*, *Rebecca* and *Daddy Long Legs* four of the five most influential books read by girls in the early 20th century. I chose *Heidi* as my fifth book because the themes best supported my discussion about the age spectrum in these books.

^{iv} Kornfeld and Jackson argue that this kind of utopia was due to a matriarchal society. I am using their argument in a slightly different way. What is important to my claim is the very fact that these authors “created utopias” for these characters to succeed in.

^v This differs slightly from the distinction between boy and girl orphans in literature.

^{vi} The only child changed by an orphan is *Heidi*’s Clara Sesemann and only because, being motherless herself, she was simply shown how to be an orphan in her own right.

^{vii} Though *A Little Princess* as a novel was published in 1905, it was originally a serialized novella published in 1888, entitled *Sara Crewe*. The novella and following play, which ran in New York in early 1903, allows for the argument of Sara Crewe as a predecessor to most of the orphans in this discussion, including *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, which was published in 1903.

^{viii} She is given the best of everything because of her father’s money and is a leader because of her talents—she can speak fluent French with the teacher and imagines stories that free her from the routine of school.

^{ix} Sanders’ article “Spinning Sympathy: Orphan Girl Novels and the Sentimental Tradition,” which was published while I was working on this paper, puts forth the idea that sympathy is used by the orphans in fiction, consciously or not, to gain consumer goods. The article focuses on the departure of early 20th century orphan fiction from the 19th century sentimental tradition, and how this tradition is evolved in the context of a consumer culture. My argument builds Sanders’ claims about sympathy, narrowing in on the effects orphans have on the adults in their lives and the types of freedom that this sympathy eventually brings them.

^x Though Cadogan and Craig in, *You’re a Brick, Angela! A New look at Girls’ Fiction from 1839-1975*, are explaining Rebecca in this quote, it can apply to all orphan-protagonists who enter their novels as children

^{xi} Ibid 49-55

^{xii} This is not to say that the girls can have *all* of these things—that is, marry and have a successful career. Countless critics have discussed the problematic aspects of the protagonist of the bildungsroman growing up. What I am saying here is simply the fact that, though they may have to resign to conventionality, they have access to the best options.

^{xiii} Bauer (ix). In her introduction to *Rebecca*, Bauer says that this novel provided the pattern for other orphan stories. Bauer names *Anne*, *Pollyanna* and *Daddy Long-Legs*.

^{xiv} John Seeyle discusses this fact in relation to Anne, saying that she was taken out of the orphanage early enough, and brought to the idyllic Green Gables, so that her imagination is “without limits” (335).

^{xv} I am considering Jerusha's "entry" the novel when her voice is introduced in first person in the series of letters she writes to Mr. Jarvis "Daddy Long Legs" Pendleton.

^{xvi} Though McQuillan and Pfeiffer take on the more complicated matter of how gender is constructed and what it means to "do" gender, I am choosing, with the selected quotes, to look at gender roles and what they call "sex-roles" as somewhat synonymous because my argument is not relying on such a distinction.

^{xvii} McQuillan and Pfeiffer, 25

^{xviii} Consider Rebecca calling the woods "delicious" (Wiggin 51) and Anne's renaming Barry's Pond as "the Lake of Shining Waters" (Montgomery 22).

^{xix} See also, Gruner, "Cinderella, Marie Antoinette, and Sara: Roles and Role Models in *A Little Princess*."

^{xx} McQuillan and Pfeiffer, 26.

^{xxi} McQuillan and Pfeiffer deal with this issue of Anne constructing her own femininity, though their argument does not give her the agency that mine does.

^{xxii} Ironically, Anne does end up marrying Gilbert. However, it is the *development* of the orphan that I am interested in here and not her choices as a young adult.

^{xxiii} Sanders, 44.

^{xxiv} See endnote xvi.

^{xxv} Almond and Almond make the point that though Heidi and the grandfather have both experienced tremendous loss, the fact that Heidi is this positive and spontaneous *child* helps her to overcome her loss much more easily than the grandfather and thus puts her in the position of healer.

^{xxvi} And in the same way as she shows the doctor the "gladness" in his profession, she awakens the Reverend to the gladness in his through the "rejoicing texts," which are the source of the Glad Game.

^{xxvii} Though earlier I stated that a niece is another version of a daughter, Pollyanna, like Rebecca, is not treated like a niece but as an unwanted orphan. Unlike *Heidi's* Deta, Polly and Miranda are not representatives of the girls' mothers because both sisters were estranged from the family by their husbands.

^{xxviii} Kornfeld and Jackson and McQuillan and Pfeiffer write about the matriarchal society and the community of women present in Avonlea—making it a place where Anne could grow up with relative power. Though Avonlea was constructed as a sort of fantasy world where this could happen, both sets of authors assert that these women still had to follow conventional gender roles (e.g. women keep house, men work). It is on the last part of this complex idea that I base my argument.

^{xxix} See endnote xii--The orphan-protagonist entering adulthood, or any heroine of the female bildungsroman for that matter, is a widely criticized topic and one that I do not explore in-depth.

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