



THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY



Horatio Alger, Jr.

1832 — 1899

A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr.,
his life, works, and influence on the culture of America.

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NUMBER 5

Another A.L. Burt find!

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The A.L. Burt Boys' Home Library Series

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'The Seck' is back

-- Editor's notebook, Page 4

President's column

I recently got a query from a researcher (Norman Barry) in Germany about obtaining the text of an Alger article, "How I came to write 'John Maynard'" (*The Writer*, December 1895). I did not have this issue of *The Writer*, and could not find it in the NIU Alger repository. However, Art Young obtained a copy of this issue through the interlibrary loan service (a useful perk enjoyed by the former Dean of NIU Libraries) and scanned it for both Norman and myself (Thanks Art!). Norman then transcribed the scanned article into a more readable format and made it available to the H.A.S.

For those of us (including myself) who had not previously read this interesting Alger article (published in *Newsboy* back in 1980), I have included a link to it on our Web site. You might also want to read Norman's (and other researchers') essays on "John Maynard" at: http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/maynard.html. If anybody has a copy of *The Writer*, Vol. 8, 1895, that they would care to donate or sell to NIU Rare Books and Special Collections, please contact Lynne Thomas (C60LMT1@wpo.cso.niu.edu), or myself (mmorley@carsonvalleybooks.com).

I'm also putting the *Newsboy* article "Forty-six Missing Titles," describing 46 A.L. Burt formats needed by the NIU Alger repository (January/February 2007, by Brad Chase and Bob Routhier) on a Web site sub-page.

I'm hoping this publicity will flush out more of the missing formats — if you have not already done so, please check your own collections for these 46 titles (I found 1 title needed by the repository in my collection). We will update this sub-page as needed titles come in and everybody will be able to view the progress made towards acquiring these 46 books. Moreover, I will be listing Alger books by A.L. Burt with the desired cover formats (but not the missing titles) for sale on eBay and I will invite prospective bidders to look for the needed titles in their collections and sell or donate them to the NIU Alger repository.

And speaking of eBay, there was a very scarce Alger book offered on eBay this summer: *The Disagreeable Woman*, written under the rare pseudonym "Julian Starr." The winning bid for this copy was \$7,000 — the most money I know of ever paid for a single Alger book. My own fantasy is to find my copy of *The Disagreeable Woman* on a dusty shelf in some obscure antique store or mall for \$5, taking it up to the

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HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of Strive and Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes — youngsters whose struggles epitomized the Great American Dream and inspired hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans for generations to come.

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Membership applications, renewals, changes of address and other correspondence should be sent to **Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255.**

Newsboy is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography. You are invited to visit the Horatio Alger Society's official Internet site at **www.thehoratioalgersociety.org**

Newsboy ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approx. 3 1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255.

The above rates apply to all want ads, along with ads offering non-Alger books for sale. However, it is the policy of the Horatio Alger Society to promote the exchange of Alger books and related Alger materials by providing space **free of charge** to our members for the **sale only** of such material. Send ads or "Letters to the Editor" to *Newsboy* editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047. E-mail: hasnewsboy@aol.com

Oops ... another A.L. Burt find!

By Bradford S. Chase (PF-412)

It was unexpected. I keep saying I don't find any good Alger material, but lately that doesn't seem to be the case. I don't know how many times in my collecting career, I've had that wonderful feeling of anticipation as I entered a used bookstore or antique mall only to be disappointed. My heart beats just a little bit faster as I make my way to the children's section. My eyes quickly scan the books on hand and usually find there is little of interest for me. Perhaps a few common Algers if I'm lucky, but none that I can use. These last five years or so, I must say it's been more disappointment than success. But hope is in the air!

Recently, I've had a couple of really good finds like the new dust jacket (A.L. Burt Format No. 9) I found in September 2005 and wrote about in the September/October 2006 issue of *Newsboy*. But the really special discoveries are far, far less than the mundane items; primarily, I think, because most of the really good and exciting new Alger material is being negotiated on the Internet. I don't trade there, never have. It's just not my way to collect Alger. I'd rather see, feel, gush a bit, get that instant emotional rush and take home the new find to further play with as a new prize. Nothing can compare with spending the time, money for gas and some effort with someone else (*camaraderie*) and being rewarded by seeing something rare and special sitting on a shelf available to me and just waiting to be plucked!

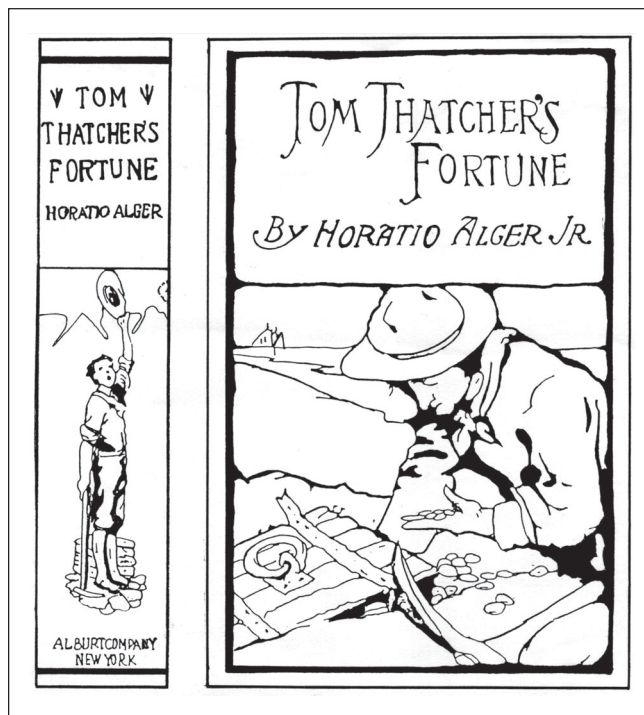
I had that experience in mid-July while relaxing from my strenuous retirement pursuits at our cottage in western New York state. Ann and I left early on our way to one of our grandkid's soccer tournaments, intending to swing by this particular used bookstore along the way, just to quickly check it out. I hadn't been to it in at least 10 years and had a vague memory of lots of children's books.

That day, I found it to be a really nice store, well ordered, neat and clean with several clerks willing to help. It wasn't busy that Saturday morning, so I poked around the children's section and found 10 or so Algers — a few Hursts, Donohues, Winstons, New York Book Company books, a dust-jacketed World Syndicate and a few other odds and ends.

"Not much of interest for me, I'm afraid," I said to one clerk who was standing near me shelving books. I told him of my interest in Alger and he said: "Let's go upstairs and see if there is anything there in our rare book rooms."

"Yes," I mumbled, hoping to appear somewhat casual. "Let's do that!"

"Actually," he said, "we have two rare book rooms



up here. This larger room has special and unusual material and the smaller room over there is where the really rare books reside." He pointed me in the direction of a couple of good-sized bookcases in the larger room which contained children's books. "Perhaps there is something there for you," he said. "Check it out and I'll look in the other rare book room over here under Alger."

I scurried over to where he had directed me and I immediately eyed about five Algers, one of which I had never seen before (in 30-odd years of collecting Alger, that is!) sitting right next to a dust jacketed little Hurst. Wow! I physically grabbed both of these and checked the others out and found they were in nice condition but nothing super-special. I yelled over to the clerk and told him what I had found and how pleased I was. When he said he didn't know much about Alger, so, of course, I jumped at the chance to fill him in.

We both then went into the rare, rare book room and my old heart was beating a mile a minute in expectation of what we might find. After a quick inspection I unfortunately found there was nothing there for me under the A's and quickly glanced at the other shelved materials. As time was short, I made a rigid mental note to be sure to return there in the future and spend more time really looking around.

We went back downstairs where I'm sure Ann could
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Editor's notebook

Jim Towey (PF-975) has been selling high-quality reprints of rare series books for years, including little-known books by Sam and Beryl Epstein (the Roger Baxter Series and Tim Penny Series), along with scarcer titles by Margaret Sutton and Mildred Wirt.

These books have sold with moderate success, as have Jim's "re-created" dust jackets for more than 2,000 series book titles.

But nothing prepared him for the popularity of his latest venture, the reissuing of Robert F. Schulker's **Seckatary Hawkins** books, a major project undertaken with the blessing and collaboration of Schulker's grandson, Randy Schulker.

"It's unbelievable," Towey told me earlier this fall when we got together during my annual New England vacation trip. "This is by far the most popular thing I've been involved with. The demand for these books has been incredible."

The quality of Towey's Seckatary Hawkins books was so impressive that I immediately bought four of them: reprints of the ultra-rare *Stormie, the Dog Stealer*, originally published by D. Appleton & Co. in 1925; and *The Ghost of Lake Tapaho*, originally offered as a 1932 Ralston-Purina radio premium (in softcover) and also extremely scarce.

The other two Hawkins books purchased that day were new to me: *The Emperor's Sword* and *Mystery of the Stonewall House*. Like Schulker's already-known 11



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

27 October 2007

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your kind thoughts during this time of bereavement. My grandmother was an important part of my life. Her death left a void in my life.

She chose me, many years ago, to be her advocate and caretaker in her old age. I pray that I lived up to her trust. In spite of the need to put my life on hold while she slowly died, I have no regrets. Is any task done for love a chore?

Over the years, her disease progressed and the grandmother I had known and loved disappeared into Alzheimer's. I saw less and less of her behind the eyes that had always looked on me with love. Her slow progression into dementia forced me to say good-bye to her on a daily basis. My period of greatest grief was four to five years ago when it was obvious (and regrettable) that her strong and healthy body would carry her well and long into many years of confusion, frustration, and disappearance of selfhood; therefore, it was a relief, for me, when the disease took its final toll. She'd lived ninety-eight years, twelve in the muddled mayhem of Alzheimer's.

For other members of her extended family (she left twelve grandchildren, numerous great- and great-great grandchildren; nieces and nephews; and two daughters), her death has been more of an ordeal. Since Bob had never really had a grandparent in his life, he adopted my grandmother as his own. Bob's request for condolences from his Partic'lar Friends was a request for condolences for him as well as for me. He will miss her. We will miss her. Thank you for your kind thoughts.

With gratitude,
Jeanette Routhier
12186 Hill Road
Swartz Creek, MI 48473

President's column

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sales counter for purchase with my face deadpan and my heart pounding . . .

On the 2008 convention front, Janice and I have already received two donation collections, so it should be another good convention for acquiring books. We are in the process of cataloging the donated books and ephemera, and we will list the catalogs on the convention subpage, just as we did last year. Please frequently check www.thehoratioalgersociety.org/convention.html for updates.

Janice and I are enjoying living in an area that has four

seasons (the San Francisco Bay area has two seasons, green and brown) and Autumn here in the Carson Valley is spectacular: the Aspen groves changing from green to yellow to red are gorgeous and need to be seen to be appreciated.

Janice, Holly and myself wish you all a safe and festive autumn.

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Michael Morley
1891 Colt Lane
Gardnerville, NV 89410
Phone: (775) 265-3063
E-mail: mmorley@carsonvalleybooks.com

Oops ...another A.L. Burt find!

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tell just by looking at my facial expression that I had found something good.

"Look honey, a little Hurst with a dust jacket and a Burt that I've never seen before." She definitely knew how good this find was for me!

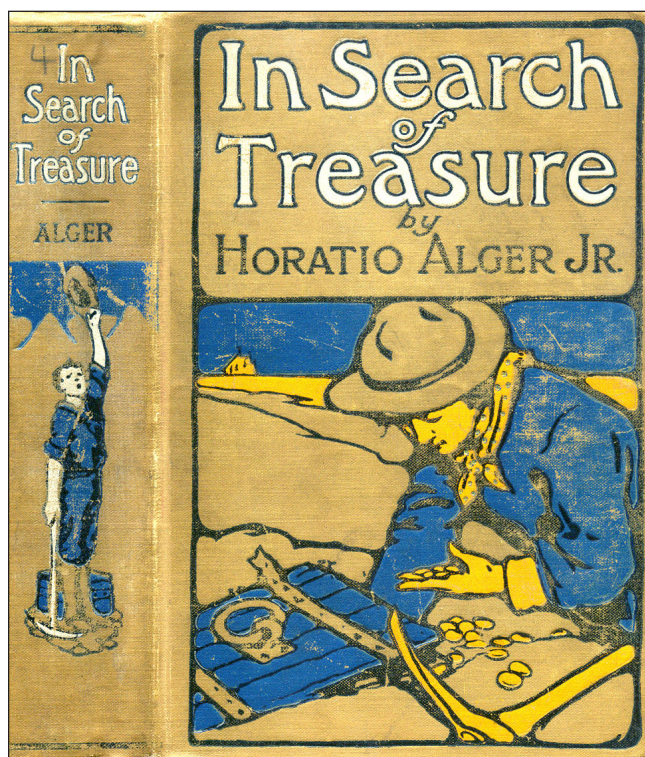
We were running late, so I went to the front of the store where I met the owner, who asked how I had made out. I showed him my new finds and told him how pleased I was. He, too, seemed delighted with what I had found and said my type of experience in his bookstore is what makes it for him in the book business. I gladly paid for the books and Ann and I headed out the door in search of our soccer game.

Now, presumably I'm a Burt / Alger expert; I wrote a whole book on the A.L. Burt Company and its production of Algers, for crying out loud! Many of my Alger friends have complimented me on the completeness and accuracy of my research and told me how helpful my book has been in their collecting activity. Well, this new Burt find changes my whole outlook on one of the Burt formats in my book.

What I found was the title *Tom Thatcher's Fortune* in Burt Format 44, a common enough title, but a complete and absolute surprise that it came in that format. This was new Burt information for me, and now I'm all excited in sharing it with you.

In my book, *Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*, published in 1983, I wrote that because no other titles had been found in all the collections I had studied (and haven't been found or seen since) except the Alger first edition *In Search of Treasure*, that title must have been the only one that Burt had published in 1909 for Format 44. I did speculate, however, that additional Alger titles may have been published in that format, but seriously questioned it, even though premier Edward Ellis researcher Denis Rogers in his article on the A.L. Burt Company (*Dime Novel Round-Up*, Vol. 46, No. 2, whole No. 524, April 1977) found an Ellis title (*Work and Win*, a 1910 reprint title) had been published by Burt in my Format 44.

I guess I figured Burt produced *In Search of Treasure* in Format 44 as an Alger first edition and then didn't bother publishing any other Algers for that format. With the Burt I just found, I admit that my book was just plain wrong and now know that at least two Alger titles were published for Burt Format 44: *Tom Thatcher's Fortune* and *In Search of Treasure*.



The A.L. Burt first edition of *In Search of Treasure*, with the same cover illustrations as the recently discovered Burt reprint of *Tom Thatcher's Fortune*.

However, we now know there may very well be other Alger titles as well (10) in Burt Format 44, as I mentioned in my book. So keep your eye out, be persistent and diligent and you too may be as lucky as me in finding something new and very special! Please let me know about your find, too!

So there, it can be exciting for us non-netters in our continuing search for good Alger material. Finding that new dust jacket for a Burt a couple of years ago and now this find of a new title for Format 44 (thus changing my book definition of what titles the format had) has certainly been exciting for this old collector. Maybe, just maybe, that wonderful feeling of anticipation in finding something special has now been bolstered and will be in top form when I enter my next bookstore or antique mall in search of Algers. I hope so!

I can't close without commenting briefly about some differences in the format designs when comparing the *Tom Thatcher's Fortune* with *In Search of Treasure* titles in Format 44. We are familiar with the cover illustrations. Both books show a boy bending over a half-buried treasure chest looking at coins in his hand on the cover. The colors differ some between the books, but that is minor. The same is true for the spine depiction of a boy holding a pick and raising his hat in the air. The major

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Oops ...another A.L. Burt find!

(Continued from Page 5)

differences relate to the font lettering on the spines and front covers, which are quite different, indicating different lettering plates (at least) were most likely used to produce these two titles. Note that *In Search of Treasure* has double-wide, black-outlined shaded lettering for the title on the cover and the author's name centered in black ink, with "by" on one line and "Horatio Alger Jr." below. For the cover of *Tom Thatcher's Fortune*, the title lettering is solid, not shaded, and "By Horatio Alger Jr." is in italicized letters, all on one line.

The lettering on the spines for the two titles differ the same way as the front covers. A major difference on the spines is the word ALGER under the title for *In Search of Treasure* title, whereas on the *Tom Thatcher's Fortune* spine, the words HORATIO ALGER appear.

Some would say that since differing plates were used (in this case for the lettering only, it appears), there are two similar (but different) formats, not two titles of the same

format (44). The spine and cover illustrations seem identical for both titles, differing only as to color which pushes me to say these are two titles of the same format (44), most likely published at different times, perhaps years apart.

I'd be very interested in seeing other titles of this format: Ellis, Alger or perhaps another author, to compare covers and spines if such actually exist someplace. Ellis's *Work and Win*, which was found by Denis Rogers some 40 years ago, is the only other title in this format that I know about, but as yet have not seen. A.L. Burt, as evidenced by its Fez editions and Gold and Green Tulip formats familiar to Alger collectors, also used those cover designs for books by other authors.

So, other titles in Format 44 may eventually turn up. Perhaps some of you can help me better define this Burt Alger Format 44 if you have any titles, no matter the author, in this Treasure Chest Format by sending me a scan or photocopy of what you have.

So, "Oops, another A.L. Burt find!" is an appropriate title for this article. See what finding one Alger book by a chance visit to a used bookstore on a warm July Saturday morning caused? One never knows what one may discover on dusty shelves, and what intriguing mysteries one such find may uncover.

Keep tuned, my friends, keep tuned.

Other similar A.L. Burt covers

By William R. Gowen (PF-706)

Brad Chase's recent discovery of a second A.L. Burt Alger title having the same cover design as its first edition of *In Search of Treasure* is not that surprising in light of the practice of Burt and other publishers of that era to produce juvenile books in various covers that the bindery found handy at the time.

In his 1983 book on Burt Alger formats, Chase stated that the A.L. Burt catalog listed 11 Alger titles to be published in what became Chase's Format 44 (Treasure Chest), but only *In Search of Treasure* had been observed, along with an A.L. Burt Edward Ellis title, *Work and Win*, discovered by the late Ellis expert Denis Rogers. It took nearly a quarter century for Chase to find another Alger title in that format, which speaks to its rarity.

Although not using the same Treasure Chest cover illustration, there were other similar Burt cover designs coming out during the same period and generally selling for one dollar. One, of course, is the first-edition Alger *Wait and Win* (1908). Another example, shown at right, is for Wilmer M. Ely's *The Young Plume Hunters*, which along with three additional 1905-11 Ely titles, *The Boy Truckers*, *The Young Pearl Hunters* and *The Young*

Treasure Seekers, were reissued with new titles as the first four of eight books in the **Boy Chums Series**, starting in 1913 and selling for 60 cents.

The artist for Ely's books, set in and near Florida, was J. Watson Davis, noted for illustrating many of Burt's higher-quality Alger editions.

There are also A.L. Burt's 12-volume **Boy Spies Series** and **Navy Boys Series**, with James Otis' and other authors' titles having earlier been issued singly under alternate titles, some using colorful covers similar to *In Search of Treasure*; and still also, Everett Tomlinson's three-volume **Blue and Buff Series**, which Burt picked up from Griffith & Rowland for its 1908-10 reprints.

So, you can start with Alger's *Wait and Win* and *In Search of Treasure* and build a nice collection of these hard-to-find A.L. Burt editions by various authors.



The A.L. Burt Boys' Home Library Series

By Robert E. Kasper (PF-327)

This essay is the third and final installment of a series of articles regarding A. L. Burt's *Boys' Home Library Series* published from September 1887 through June 1890. The first article appeared in the July-August 2000 issue of *Newsboy* and described in detail the paper editions and all known variants. The second article, found in the July-August 2001 *Newsboy*, covered the earliest hard-cover editions and where they fit in the publishing sequence. This concluding article presents new evidence to substantiate the simultaneous publication of the paper- and hard-cover editions. Standard bibliographies should now be updated to reflect these first-edition identifying points.

It had been presumed for many years, and by most Alger bibliographers, that the 24 numbers from the A. L. Burt Boys' Home Library Series, issued in paper wrappers and sold by subscription, were the first editions of the respective titles¹. Subsequent research revealed that this hypothesis was probably incorrect as evidence surfaced, albeit *prima facie*, that the hard-cover editions were published co-terminus with the paper editions.

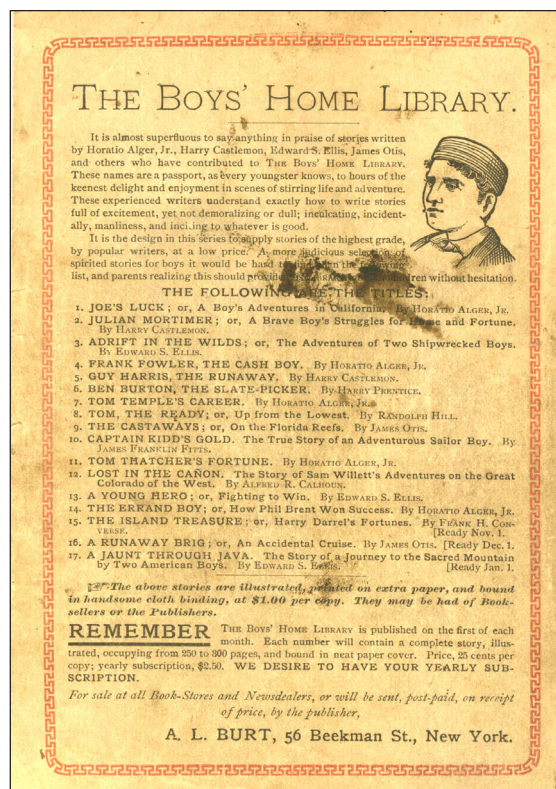
A good example is an existing hard-cover *Fez* edition of *Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy* with the early 162 William Street address and containing a bona fide Christmas 1887 inscription. *Frank Fowler* was the fourth number of this series, which according to advertisements in the previous titles was to be "Ready" on December 1 [1887]. This evidence would indicate that the two editions were available at the same time.

Another example can be found in the advertisements located in the rear of the book and outside cover of the paper editions. In Number 5 (*Guy Harris, the Runaway* by Harry Castlemon, issued in January 1888), an internal advertisement lists the first six numbers available in cloth editions and priced at \$1.00 each. In February 1888, the following notice appears on the rear cover of *Ben Burton, the Slate Picker* by Harry Prentice (Number 6):

The above stories are printed on extra paper, and bound in handsome cloth binding, at \$1.00 per copy. They may be had of Booksellers or the Publisher.

This notice, or some variation, appeared on the rear cover of all subsequent paper editions.

However, owner inscriptions and publisher's advertisements (Continued on Page 8)



Ex. 1 and 2: The front and rear covers of the first-issue paper edition. Note that 14 titles are available and three are projected.

The A.L. Burt Boys' Home Library Series

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may not always provide conclusive evidence of simultaneous publication. Publishers on many occasions may change or cancel their forthcoming books that had been advertised weeks or months earlier. Gift inscriptions, especially if written by a child, could be imprecise or illegible. These attributes can often be helpful in dating a book and determining publication sequence, but they should not be considered infallible.

But several corroborating announcements have recently come to light regarding the publication of *The Errand Boy* by Horatio Alger, Jr. (see Ex. 1); one in *Publishers' Weekly*, the *American Book Trade Journal* and one from *The Daily News* of Frederick, Maryland.

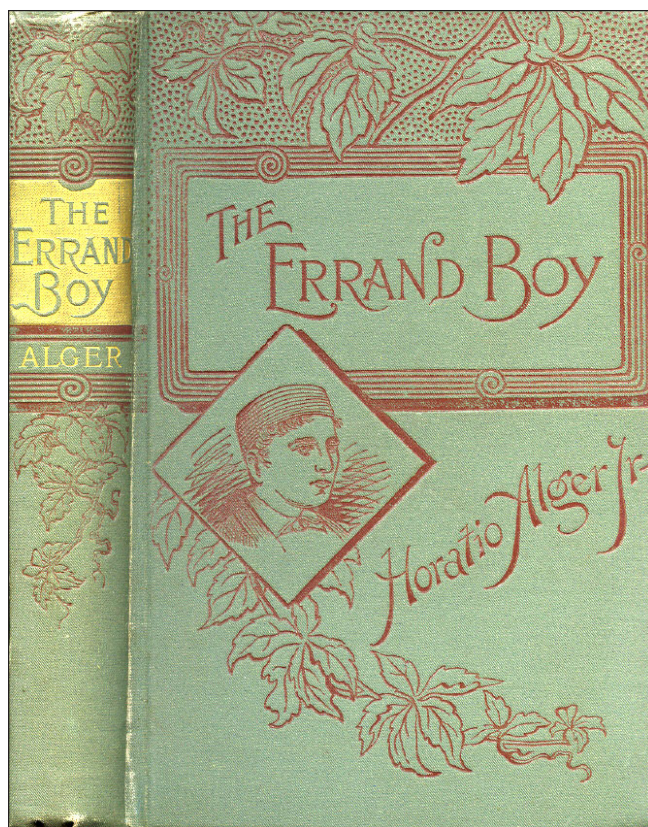
The first notice appears in the October 20, 1888 issue of *Publishers' Weekly*². On page 578, under "Weekly Record of New Publications," *The Errand Boy* is listed at 255 [pages], D[uodecimo], cl[oth] and \$1 (see Ex. 4). The second notice appears two days later, on October 22, in *The Daily News* under "New Publications." It reads as follows:

"The Errand Boy; Or, How Phil Brent Won Success." By Horatio Alger, Jr. No. 14 of the Boys' Home Library. Paper, 12 mo. Price 25 cents. Published by A. L. Burt, 56 Beekman Street, New York. "The Errand Boy" is the latest issue of the popular Boys' Home Library and is in Horatio Alger's well known vein. It will compare favorably with the best of his many stories for boys, and no one has better learned the secret of interesting the young folks as he.

There is nothing "preachy" in his books, though their tone is high and pure; they tell of honest manly boys full of pluck and grit, just such youngsters as boys themselves like. The Boys' Home Library is one of the greatest successes of this era of cheap books. It gives high class stories for boys by famous authors at the nominal price of 25 cents.

These notices, published two days apart, confirm that the paper- and hard-cover editions were available at the same time.

The true first issue of the paper edition of *The Errand Boy* will list on the rear cover the first 14 numbers of the series in print with Numbers 15 through 17 projected (see Ex. 2). The correct address for Burt will be 56 Beekman Street. The genuine first issue in hardcover



Ex. 3: The first hard-cover edition. Note that the earliest issue is slightly thinner than later printings.

(see Ex. 3) will show the Beekman Street address also and list not more than 17 titles from the series. If your hard-cover *Fez* edition of *The Errand Boy* conforms to the above points, then it can safely be considered a first edition.

Of course, we can't assume this publication scenario applied to all numbers from the Boys' Home Library Series, but with the evidence at hand including book inscriptions, advertisements and publishing announcements, it seems logical that this was the case.

*The author is indebted to Arthur P. Young (PF-941) for providing information from *Publishers' Weekly* and *The Daily News*. Thanks also to Lynne Thomas, Head of Rare Books and Special Collections at Northern Illinois University Libraries, for providing scans of the paper edition of *The Errand Boy*.*

NOTES

1. This series contained seven titles by Horatio Alger, including *Joe's Luck*; *Frank Fowler*, the *Cash Boy*; *Tom Temple's Career*, *Tom Thatcher's Fortune*, *The Errand Boy*, *Tom the Bootblack* and *Tony the Hero*.

2. Volume XXXIV, No. 16, Whole No. 873, p. 578.

578

The Publishers' Weekly.

[No. 873] Oct. 20, '88

WEEKLY RECORD OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.*

The abbreviations are usually self-explanatory. c. after the date indicates that the book is copyrighted; if the copyright date differs from the imprint date, the year of copyright is added. Books of foreign origin of which the edition (annotated, illustrated, etc.) is entered as copyright, are marked c. ed.; translations, c. tr.

A colon after initial designates the most usual given name, as: A: Augustus; B: Benjamin; C: Charles; D: David; E: Edward; F: Frederic; G: George; H: Henry; I: Isaac; J: John; L: Louis; N: Nicholas; P: Peter; R: Richard; S: Samuel; T: Thomas; W: William.

Sizes are designated as follows: F. (folio: over 30 centimeters high); Q. (4to: under 30 cm.); O. (8vo: 25 cm.); D. (12mo: 20 cm.); S. (16mo: 17½ cm.); T. (24mo: 15 cm.); TT. (32mo: 12½ cm.); Ps. (48mo: 10 cm.). Sq., obl. nar., designate square, oblong, narrow books of these heights

*Adams, I: E. Political oratory of Emory A. Storrs; from Lincoln to Garfield. N. Y. and Chic., Belford, Clarke & Co., 1888. D. cl., \$1.25.

*Alger, Horatio, jr. The errand-boy; or, how Phil. Brent won success. N. Y., A. L. Burt, 1888. 255 p. D. cl., \$1.

*Allen, E. Heron. Kisses of fate. N. Y. and Chic., Belford, Clarke & Co., 1888. D. cl., \$1; pap., 50 c.

Allen, J: H. The tariff and its evils; or, protection which does not protect. N. Y., G: P. Putnam's Sons, 1888. c. 7+122 p. D. (Questions of the day, no. 53.) cl., \$1.

Ex. 4: Notice from Publisher's Weekly showing Alger's *Errand Boy* was available on October 20, 1888.

Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 4)

books, these titles were compiled from Schulkers' Cincinnati newspaper serials of the 1920s and 30s.

"Some stories ran in the newspaper but never made it to book form, so we have made this small printing of the next-in-the-series stories so that those who want to read them can do so," Randy Schulkers writes on the dedication page for the new books.

Robert Schulkers' newspaper stories were featured on a Chicago-based NBC radio program, which reached an even wider audience than the regional circulation of the Cincinnati Enquirer and the stories' syndication to more than 100 other newspapers (Milwaukee was a very strong hotbed). Many local "Fair and Square" fan clubs sprang up, with official souvenir items including membership cards and pins, pennants, posters and plaster bookends molded in the Seck's likeness.

Towey noted that the great popularity of his new Seckatary Hawkins books is aided by the fact that children and grandchildren of the original club members have carried the torch forward. Although a fraction of the original clubs' million-plus national membership, there is still a large contingent of Seckatary Hawkins

fans out there. Randy Schulkers oversees the club, and you can join online by visiting www.seckatary.com.

The goal of Towey and Randy Schulkers is to publish in hardcover all 18 of the 29 original newspaper serials not making it into book form. *The Emperor's Sword* and *Mystery of the Stonewall House* are a fantastic start. The books are bound in high-quality dark blue covers (about 5¾ by 8¾ inches), the front cover and spine stamped in gold, including the famous full-profile image of "the Seck" centered on the front cover.

Also of interest is that dust jackets for the books, including *Stormie*, *the Dog Stealer* and *The Ghost of Lake Tapaho*, all come in the familiar pastel-colored format that collectors have prized over the years.

These limited editions are a welcome addition to any collection and mandatory for fans of Robert F. Schulkers and his unique, humorous writing.

Note that some titles may already be sold out. The price is \$45 each (including dust jacket). Write to Jim Towey at 249 Hartland Road, West Granby, CT 06090, by e-mail at toweyj@cox.net, or by phone at (860) 653-7447. Also, the new books and collectibles (baseball caps, T-shirts, etc.) are available at www.seckatary.com.

In an upcoming Newsboy article, we'll offer a more detailed report on this fascinating project.

Endless Frontiers and the Emancipation from History: Horatio Alger's Reconstruction of Place and Time in *Ragged Dick*

By Aaron Shaheen

[The capitalist] is fanatically intent on the valorization of value; consequently he ruthlessly forces the human race to produce for production's sake. . . . Moreover, the development of capitalist production makes it necessary constantly to increase the amount of capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking, and competition subordinates every individual capitalist to the immanent laws of capitalist production, as external forces and coercive laws. It compels him to keep extending his capital, so as to preserve it, and he can only extend it by means of progressive accumulation.

Karl Marx, *Capital* 1:739

Conventional wisdom suggests that capitalism operates at its optimal level when people invest in the never-arriving future. In fact, many of Marx's own reservations about such an economic system are based on this particular issue of time. In the epigraph, for example, he registers an appropriate disconnect between "extending" capital and "preserving" it (739). Capitalism, he argues, attempts to resolve this tension by implying that any enjoyment of the present is inextricably linked to the prospect of future accumulation.

Whenever individuals are negatively affected by economic slumps, they may sense the paradox of time that Marx's passage mentions. Theoretically, the stock market is healthiest when investors continue to speculate and invest instead of withdrawing their stocks at the present value. If the market is ailing, we are told, it is because of low consumer confidence. When people take their money out of the market, they do so fearing the stock prices will only go down further; the less confident investors are in future recovery, the more the economy suffers.

It was during the postbellum era that America truly began to understand the intricacies and contradictions of capitalist progression. Having emerged from a civil

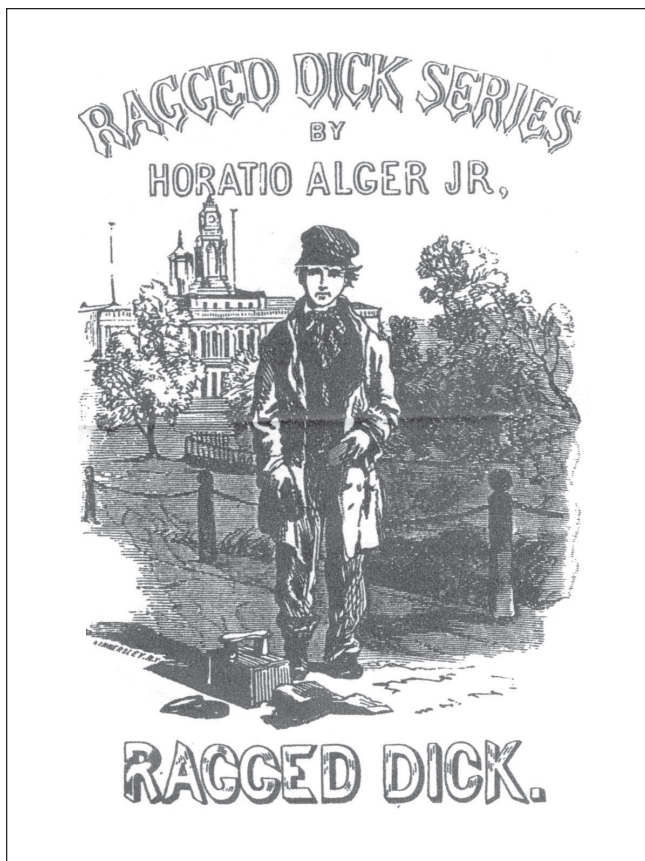
war that cost over 600,000 American lives, the country—the South included—cast its lot with industry. While families such as the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, and Carnegies amassed wealth at unprecedented rates, people began to wonder what kind of rough beast capitalism really was. Uncertainty about the economic order only became more pronounced when the later decades of the nineteenth century experienced a series of financial panics of significant size. As the depressions of 1873-79, 1882-85, and 1893-97 would attest, America's economic progression was riddled with tremendous doubt.

Yet certainly not everyone in the latter half of the nineteenth century was as skeptical about capitalism's movement into the future. Serialized in 1867—the same year Marx's *Capital* was published—Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* paints a more affirmative picture. In depicting Dick Hunter's rise to respectability and economic self-sufficiency, the best-selling novel for adolescent boys becomes a larger meditation on the conflict between the present and the future. Should Dick live only for the present moment and fritter away any money he has on simple amusements, he would forfeit his aspirations of capital accumulation and bourgeois respectability.

Yet because of his hard work, good luck, and amiable personality, that threat is never seriously entertained. Therefore the seamy side of capitalism—the frequent insurmountability of present hardship—is never given full voice. Instead, the novel operates as an ideological device, denying the reader a view of what might happen should capitalism not live up to its full potential.

The intent of this study is to examine Alger's treatment of time, and how time in turn affects concepts of space. Appearing almost ex nihilo on the streets of New York, Dick Hunter is the quintessential postbellum "American Adam," a term R.W.B. Lewis made famous in his 1955 book of that name. Furthermore, *Ragged Dick* makes capitalism coterminous with Lewis's mythical American: existing almost ahistorically, the two move forward into a future that seemingly has no end. Alger then creates a spatial corollary to the novel's temporal boundlessness. As Marxist critic David Harvey points

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out, the greater the forward momentum of capitalist energies, "the more important geographical extension is for sustaining capital accumulation" (Spaces of Capital 242).

Yet Alger provides a unique variation on the concept that Harvey outlines, reconceptualizing the urban landscape as a new American frontier perpetually teeming with possibilities. For Alger, the city and the frontier exist dialectically. In fact, these two sites are not only mutually dependent, but almost one and the same. By configuring this relationship, the novel provided a counterbalance to the growing sentiment that the postbellum eastern city was the complete opposite of the frontier, a place of economic stasis. Read in this light, *Ragged Dick's* greatest (or perhaps most dubious) achievement is its ability to deny the very real possibility of urban economic stagnancy in both temporal and spatial terms.

R.W.B. Lewis has made the American Adam a byword in the realm of American studies. In his opinion, the New World was seen as a type of Eden, and those who made the trek from European shores would find themselves "emancipated from history" (5). This concept has run throughout *Ragged Dick* criticism in one form or another. In a Lacanian reading of the novel, Madonne M. Miner similarly argues that

the novel's opening dialogue between Dick and a porter casts the bootblack as an infant prior to the mirror stage, "prior to the confrontation with lack, prior to the inauguration of desire and the subject's installation in language" (236). With or without regard to psychoanalysis, Miner may indeed have a point about Dick's place in time: when the porter wakes Dick in this first scene, one gets the impression that the sleep from which he awakens is an act of oblivion that has severed any emotional or practical ties to the past.

Yet after awakening from oblivion, Dick is undeniably a part of his present time and space. We know very early on, for example, that he lives in New York, and we know from later chapters detailing the construction of Central Park that the novel must take place sometime slightly before the start of the Civil War.

More recently, Lauren Berlant has updated R.W.B. Lewis's temporal themes, but in doing so she treats them more dialectically. The locus of American identity, Berlant claims, wavers between the historical and the ahistorical, the ubiquitous and the local: "The modern nation always represents itself as immanent in the movement of historical forces and always operating within the scope of a 'limitless future'" (26).

From the outset Dick shows this temporal duality, which charts not only the particular moments of his rise from street urchin to respectable citizen, but also more generally his participation as the abstract Consumer in an everexpanding American marketplace. In fact, as industrial America would yield forth the concept of "consumer citizenship" in the decades following the Civil War, the ability to gain access to such American verities as "democracy," "freedom," and "equality" would be predicated on the acquisition of material objects.

In joking that his coat once belonged to George Washington, for example, he shows how possession of a tattered textile commodity situates him at the crossroads of the historical and ahistorical. Such a reference to the coat of the nation's first president directs attention to historical specificity; yet insofar as Washington holds an iconic status that goes virtually unrivaled, his name and even his purported hand-me-downs live on forever in what Berlant calls the "National Symbolic." Even when Micky Maguire steals the coat along with Dick's "Napoleon pants" in the penultimate chapter, Dick is in no hurry to retrieve them.

Now having secured finer clothes and a ten-dollar-per-week income, he sees his Washington coat simultaneously as a historical symbol of "the old vagabond life which he hoped never to resume" and as a reminder "to press onward, and rise as high as

(Continued on Page 12)

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possible" according to the ahistorical principles of the capitalist trajectory (Alger, *Ragged Dick* 185).¹

Alger, therefore, sets up a paradigm in which commodities and participation in the marketplace allow Dick to live simultaneously in a specific time and for a future of respectability and revenue. At one point early on, Dick tells Frank Whitney slyly, "I ain't knocked around the city streets all my life for nothin'" (52). But up until that point he has knocked around the streets for nothing—at least in terms of material commodities and capital accumulation. It is therefore significant that the reader first encounters him on the day when his entire worldview changes, the day when Dick stops living exclusively in calendrical, historical time and begins to see himself as part of a larger economy whose expansion relies on never slowing down in the present moment.

In the novel's forward momentum, even family members, of whom there is very little mention, are treated with minimal affect. The reader does discover at one point that Dick did have parents, but they died so early in his life that he has no emotional attachment to them. His mother died when he was three, and his father died at sea even earlier (51). Aside from a few hazy recollections of the former, Dick's only tie to the past and family is a ratty felt cap he claims was his grandfather's.

Before setting out on their tour of New York, he tells Frank, "'my grandfather used to wear it when he was a boy, and I've kep' it ever since out of respect for his memory'" (24). In a move more in keeping with sentimental fiction, Alger includes touching references to a grandfather to show that the boot-black has a soft side where his family is concerned; the narrator constantly reminds us, after all, that Dick is generally respectful and honorable despite his grubby appearance. But once the boys reach Chatham Street a few chapters later, Dick decides a new felt hat would be just the thing to accompany the clothes Mr. Whitney loaned him to wear while escorting his nephew around town: "Dick succeeded in quite a neat looking cap, which corresponded much better with his appearance than the one he had on. The last, not being considered worth keeping, Dick dropped on the sidewalk, from which, on looking back, he saw it picked up by a brother bootblack who appeared to consider it better than his own" (32).

Dick is more than willing to discard the cap when given the right opportunity. The new cap is significant because it marks a major step into the world of commodities and exchange. Although he had held onto the old cap for personal reasons, sentiment means little

to the budding capitalist unless it can be packaged, marketed, and sold.

By the time the two boys reach Chatham Street to purchase the new cap, there is no more mention of his grandfather. The scene lends ironic credence to Marx's claim that capitalism "has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation" (Manifesto 53). Yet even more remarkable is the way in which the acquisition of the new commodity situates Dick both as a legatee of a historical past—the inheritor of a family cap—and as a member of an abstract consumer class that buttresses the future of the American economy.

Already, it would seem, capitalism has begun to mystify the relations between the consumer and the commodity. The new cap's exchange value is clearly greater than the sentimental value of the old one. Likewise, the clothes Dick receives from Frank Whitney serve as a severing of the past. After taking a quick bath—no doubt a type of baptism signaling the entrance into middle-class respectability—Dick puts on Frank's old clothes and surveys himself in the mirror. "'By gracious!'" Dick exclaims, "'that isn't me, is it?'" Frank then asks: "'Don't you know yourself?'" (24). Dick excitedly proceeds to shine Frank's boots, claiming, "'I'll make 'em shine so you can see your face in 'em'" (25).

As shiny commodities these shoes not only reflect an image of Dick's new self; their reflection also reminds him of the world of exchange and consumption that is wholly responsible for that new self. There is a certain hierarchy implicit in this scene as Dick, dressed up to look like Frank, is reflected in Frank's shoes. Servile labor is the vehicle of transformation, providing Dick not only with a fine new set of clothes, but also with an upwardly mobile mindset.²

Over the years several critics have commented on Dick's unbelievable luck. The fact that he runs into Frank Whitney and his uncle, or that Frank gives Dick a set of his old clothes, is based on being in the right place at the right time. And, of course, as R. Richard Wohl has pointed out, luck is by definition "unearnable" (503). Luck contradicts the ethic of hard work, which is an essential component to any capitalist success story. Yet I would argue that while Dick is undoubtedly lucky, Alger is perhaps trying to make a different point about capitalism. Like Dick, whose history is sketchy, capitalism also attempts to obfuscate or deny its own historicity.³

Michael Perelman's *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* attempts to delineate this historical enigma. As his subtitle suggests, classical economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo were loath to acknowledge the role capitalism played in stripping rural communities of their economic self-

sufficiency. Smith, Perelman argues, "attempt[ed] to advocate capitalist society without acknowledging the existence of the means that were historically necessary to create it" (364).

Horatio Alger seems to treat so-called luck as a part of capitalism's lack of history. The opportunities of which Dick takes advantage appear without any logical antecedent. In this sense, critics such as Wohl who see luck as completely divorced from the capitalist system are unconscious of the way in which economists have attempted to invent a story of capitalism's *ex nihilo* arrival in Western societies.

Yet at least on one level, *Ragged Dick* is at odds with the concept of the American Adam, for Adam purportedly arrives on the shore of the New World with boundless nature all before him. James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo, for example, "seems to take his start outside time, or on the very outer edge of it, so that his location is essentially in space alone; and second, his initial habitat is space as spaciousness, as the unbounded, the area of total possibility" (Lewis 91).⁴

Dick, on the other hand, is a wholly urban creature, despite his provocative last name "Hunter." In fact, he never leaves New York at any time during the novel. In other ways, however, he is very much Leatherstocking's heir. "What is specific about America," Lauren Berlant claims, "is the way it has politically exploited its privileged relation to utopian discourse: the contradiction between the 'nowhere' of utopia and the 'everywhere' of the nation dissolved by the American recasting of the 'political' into the terms of providential ideality" (31). It is this negotiation between the nowhere and the everywhere that can prompt critics such as Lewis to see Bumppo as standing outside of time and space and yet still enmeshed in very specific historical events such as the French and Indian War of the 1750s.

True, Dick does not seem to have unlimited geographical space at his disposal; in fact, the novel goes to great lengths to point out New York's myriad streets and buildings. But as I have argued previously, he is certainly liberated in terms of time. With his new clothes, he moves off into the future with relatively few problems to stall him. This sense of temporal liberation may actually provide the opportunity to see the crowded city both as a historical reality and as a limitless spatial expanse ripe for future capitalist ventures.

Ragged Dick's achievement, I would therefore argue, is its ability to provide a different light in which to view the blighted metropolis of later nineteenth-century America. Even before the Civil War, northeastern cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, were experiencing tremendous population booms. Between 1830 and 1860 nearly two million Irish immigrants came to America; during those same years over a million and

a half German immigrants arrived. In the decade of the 1850s, the time when *Ragged Dick* most likely takes place, over 1.8 million Irish and German immigrants entered the country, primarily through Boston and New York. In that decade, the overall immigrant population explosion reached slightly under 2.6 million (Bailey and Kennedy 316).

While many of the German immigrants had enough money to settle in the Midwest, most others who arrived — particularly the Irish — stayed in the eastern cities to find any work available to them. Simultaneously, as a result of what Marx has called "primitive accumulation," which is a process whereby capitalists strip the countryside of its resources, more people from the American yeomanry relocated to the city in search of wage labor. But for these dispossessed farmers and immigrants, the promise of earning a decent wage — of becoming respectable just as Dick does — was often spurious. As David Harvey argues, "Left to its own devices, unchecked and unregulated, free market capitalism would end up depleting and ultimately destroying the two sources of its own wealth—the labor and the soil" (*Spaces of Hope* 28).

Promising wealth, the cities often delivered misery. Over time they became centers of poverty as a growing supply of unskilled laborers was forced to work for smaller wages. To recast Harvey's sentiments in more temporal terms, the urban landscape held little promise for the future; the northern city was already becoming the site where capitalism's present had caught up with its future. By the time of the novel's serial publication, immigrant woes were further compounded by the first small waves of emancipated slaves who moved from the South to find work in northern and midwestern urban centers. Given these historical circumstances, surplus labor was inevitable.

In its own way, the preface to Alger's novel even acknowledges the stagnancy of urban capitalism. Though providing the stipulation that the novel "does not aspire to strict historical accuracy," the author does say that it will "illustrate the life and experiences of the friendless and vagrant children who are now numbered by thousands in New York and other cities" (1). What happens when capitalism's present catches up with its future? To this Alger implicitly replies: urban children become dross. Judging solely from the preface, one might guess that *Ragged Dick* is an exposé of urban blight rather than a homage to capitalism. In fact, the preface is immensely significant because it gives readers a darker side of New York, yet one that the rest of the novel will then deny.

Though the preface clearly begins with a bit of hard-nosed realism, the novel is fairly whimsical and

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lighthearted. (One must remember, after all, that it was intended for young boys, not mature readers of realism.) As such, the preface helps initiate a larger, more sobering discourse on the role of the city in postbellum American—a discourse that spanned the second half of the nineteenth century.

It is worth pausing here for a moment to survey a few of the more “realistic” voices in this discourse that came in the decades following the publication of Alger’s novel. By briefly discussing Jacob A. Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous “frontier thesis,” and Charles Loring Brace’s *The Dangerous Classes of New York*, I suggest that this discourse of postbellum urban blight is inextricably linked to a counternarrative of the American frontier. As I then show, Alger’s novel for boys lays the foundation for this counternarrative.

Photography came of age not long before the time of *Ragged Dick*’s publication. More than any other conflict before it, the Civil War was able to bring the bloody reality of war to the homefront because technology had improved to the point where mass-produced photos of battles (and their aftermaths) became possible. In the following years and decades, the postbellum American imagination was forced to confront the specter of urban blight as close up as it had confronted dead soldiers during the years 1861-65.

Perhaps the most famous urban documentary of the Gilded Age is Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*. Though published in 1890 — a good twenty-three years after *Ragged Dick* — the book stands as an official marker of postbellum America’s anxiety about the urban landscape. What makes this particular book germane to my study is the way it implicitly questions capitalism’s ability to regenerate itself in the city. It is precisely this commonly-

held anxiety that *Ragged Dick* anticipates and tries to subvert.

Riis’s prose emphasizes an overriding sense of economic stasis. Concerning the proliferation of the slums, he says, “We know now there is no way out; that the system that was the evil offspring of public neglect and private greed has come to stay, a storm center of our civilization” (1). In fact, Riis’s indictment of the bourgeoisie’s indifference to poverty is based primarily on the premise that capitalism’s notion of economic progression is a sham. Ironically, it is the forwardlooking tendencies of the capitalists — the tendency “to produce for production’s sake” (Marx, *Capital* 739) — that actually bring economic prosperity to a halt in urban America.

Riis goes on: “The greed of capital that wrought the evil must itself undo it, as far as it can now be undone” (2). To remedy the damage that has been done, he suggests something that at first seems counterintuitive: going back in time. In fact, one might sense a hint of nostalgia in his prose. Riis even evokes New York’s “frontier” stage, a time when “the solid Dutch burgher grew his tulips or early cabbage” (6). But this forward progression has stopped, and with it has come the new era of the tenement houses, which are “hotbeds that carry death to rich and poor alike” (2). What New York City needs, Riis implies, is to return to a frontier-like state of abundance and possibility.

Indeed, the frontier is a central concern for nineteenth-century ideas of economic renewal. Like Riis, Frederick Jackson Turner sensed the stagnancy of capitalism in urban settings during the Gilded Age. Delivering his famous “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” before colleagues at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, the young history professor used the 1890 national census report to claim that there was no discernable “fall line” to mark the location of the western frontier (4). But just as important is Turner’s claim that America continually reinvents itself at the fall line:

The peculiarity of American institutions is the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people—to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life. ... American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The



Jacob A. Riis (1849-1914)



Jacob A. Riis was America's first photojournalist, learning his craft as a New York police reporter. His widely published photographs of the city's poor, such as these homeless boys sleeping, were a major influence on social reform.

true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West. (2, 2-3)

This passage is significant because it provides the best evidence of a nineteenth-century capitalist mindset prior to the closing of the frontier. Underneath Turner's paean to the "Great West" lie a number of assumptions about the American city, many of which, as we shall see soon enough, Alger expresses in *Ragged Dick*. Roughly at the time Turner delivered his speech, the United States was slipping into its third major depression in as many decades. Recovery would not come for another four years. No doubt the flow of capital and the stagnation of cities was of particular concern to a nation on the brink of financial crisis, just as "the complex city life" and the "expansion westward" were for this University of Wisconsin history professor.

Like Riis, Turner implies that the urban East is the site of economic stagnancy. But for Turner especially, American capitalism has been able to lurch forward because there had always been an abundance of land to go around: should capital stop flowing in the city, the surplus labor force need simply move on to another economic venue farther west.

For those alive when *Ragged Dick* was first serialized in 1867, it appeared that the above process could repeat itself ad infinitum. In fact, in that very year America's frontier was yet again expanding- this time with Secretary of State William Seward's purchase of Alaska from Imperial Russia at the bargain price of \$7,200,000 (Paolino 196). And of

course Seward's purchase was only one in a series of North American acquisitions that started in the nineteenth century with the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.

The United States made further gains through the annexation of Florida in the 1820s and through the white expansion into Mexican territory that ultimately led to the Mexican War in the 1840s. Even after the frontier officially closed in 1890, America capped off the nineteenth century with even more acquisitions, this time in the Caribbean and South Pacific.

(To be concluded in November-December)

NOTES

I would like to thank Jill Pruett for her help in the initial development of this essay. After much effort, Jill managed to convince me that, yes, Ragged Dick really is a funny novel.

1. See Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmur's *The Park and the People*. Park construction began in 1857. We are told that Dick and Frank arrive at Central Park while it is still in the early stages of development, an indication that the novel probably takes place in the late 1850s. Apparently the final phase of construction of the park began in 1863. For a more detailed account of the ways consumer citizenship has attached itself to American youth, consult Joel Spring, *Educating the Consumer-Citizen*.

2. I am indebted to an anonymous reader at Children's Literature for this particular insight.

3. This sense of historical obfuscation would no doubt have compelled Marx and Engels to apply Hegel's system of historical synthesis to capitalist modes of production. As a fundamental concept, dialectical materialism is historically based.

4. There are certain limitations to Lewis's assumptions, however. *The Pioneers*, for example, shows an aged Natty who needs to keep moving west to avoid the growing white population.

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