



*Horatio Alger, Jr.*

1832 — 1899

THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

# NEWSBOY



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

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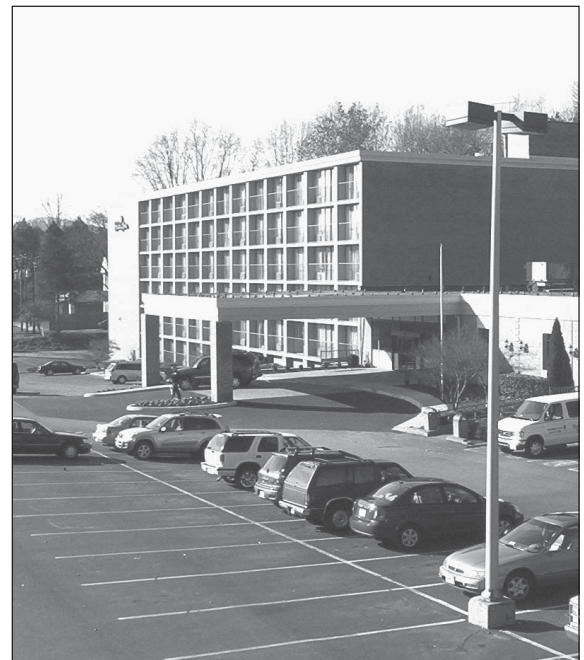
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## President's column

We are in the midst of the holiday season, and I hope all will have family and friends with them to enjoy this time of the year. Whether it is a white Christmas in the northern climate or simply the warmth of the southland, the important thing is that we are healthy and happy. May the coming year bring joy to you and yours.

In 1971, my wife's paternal grandfather, William Gage, died at the age of 77. Shortly thereafter, we agreed to store some of his family belongings in our barn. Among the things was an old trunk full of books. One of the books was a very worn Hurst copy of Horatio Alger's *Facing the World*. The inscription on the inside cover says "Willie Gage LeRaysville Pa. presented from Luther H. Gage"

Luther was William's older brother, fifteen years older, and I find it very interesting that he was probably in his early twenties when he gave his younger brother this book. I remembered reading and enjoying these books as a young boy. I took the book into the house and read it, and again enjoyed it.

A couple of weeks later I was in a bookstore in nearby Endicott, The Village Book Store, and I purchased two Alger books at \$2.00 each. They were, coincidentally, Hurst copies of *Strive and Succeed* and *Strong and Steady*.

I had officially become an Alger collector. I think our readers would like to hear similar stories of how they first became Alger collectors.

Host Jeff Looney's first article on the 2009 convention in Charlottesville, Va., is on Page 3, along with photos of our convention hotel. Although more information on the convention will appear in the following two issues of *Newsboy*, the special after-hours tour of Monticello looks like a "not to be missed" event.

The H.A.S. convention registration form and schedule of events will be enclosed with the January-February *Newsboy*, with this information also available at [www.thehoratioalgersociety.org](http://www.thehoratioalgersociety.org)

Again, Vivian and I wish you a very happy and prosperous holiday season!

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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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## *First glance at the 2009 H.A.S. convention*

# The Charlottesville Charivari

By Jeff Looney (PF-903)

The 2009 Horatio Alger Society convention, to be held from April 30 through May 3 in beautiful Charlottesville, Virginia, is shaping up nicely. The Emmet Street Holiday Inn, which will be the focal point of our activities, has just completed a \$4 million renovation. All of the common areas including meeting and banquet rooms, restaurant, lobby and hospitality suites have been upgraded. The hotel rooms have received a similar upgrade also.

We have managed to secure a special convention rate of \$89 (plus tax) for all participants and this rate will apply to any members that wish to extend their stay. The hotel will begin releasing our block of rooms to the general public on April 1, 2009, so please don't hesitate to reserve your room before that date. Although our convention will not overlap with graduation for the University of Virginia (two weeks later), there will be many pre-graduation activities including seminars, reunions and sporting events. Charlottesville is a destination and is busy all year but especially so during the month of May.

Accommodations will be at a premium, so please reserve your room as soon as possible. If you cannot reserve a room before April 1, 2009, it may be possible to stay at the nearby Marriott or Sheraton for \$225 per night, but don't count on it.

The program for Friday morning will include talks by Newsboy editor Bill Gowen, former editor and long-time Society member Jack Bales and Terry Belanger, Founding Director of the Rare Book School, on the Harry Castlemon Gunboat Series. Although located on the campus of the University of Virginia, the Rare Book School is an independent non-profit educational institute supporting the study of the history of books and printing and related subjects. Founded in 1983, it moved to its present home at the University of Virginia in 1992. Terry is also working on a display of rare Castlemon

items especially for our members, tentatively scheduled on Saturday, May 2.

Our annual convention auction will take place on Friday and may possibly slip over to Saturday as we have several nice collections to auction. These libraries include first editions, better editions and many books with dust jackets. Make sure to bring your checkbook!

On Saturday an optional private after-hours tour of

*(Continued on Page 4)*



**The Emmet Street Holiday Inn will host the 2009 Horatio Alger Society convention. Below: the registration desk of the newly modernized hotel.**



## Editor's notebook

In our tribute to Eddie LeBlanc in the most recent issue, I did not have space to cover everything, most interestingly, my final visit to see Eddie at his home in Fall River, Massachusetts, in the mid-1990s.

By that time, he had suffered his first stroke, which impaired his walking but not his voice or spirit. In fact, he was able to attend several Horatio Alger Society conventions and Popular Culture Association conferences following his initial illness, which he talked about matter-of-factly with no self-pity. On this final visit, I mentioned to him that growing up near Albany, N.Y., I had been fond of the local diners in that area, and had become somewhat of a "diner buff" in recent years. These are the stainless steel diners built mostly from the 1940s through the 1960s in factories (usually in New Jersey) and trucked to various cities and towns rather than constructed on-site.

Eddie's eyes lit up. "Bill, if you love diners, you've come to the right place. Fall River is famous for its diners." Immediately, he and his wife, Rita, suggested we go out to dinner — to a diner, of course. Eddie was walking with a cane at that point, but he said it was no problem, noting that they went out to dinner often.

So, we headed to the north side of Fall River and went to Al Mac's Diner, built in 1954, with its gleaming stainless steel exterior perfectly preserved, and its signature large red neon sign on the roof. Despite my protestations, Rita and Eddie picked up the tab, pleased that my "diner fix" had been satisfied.

In another Eddie LeBlanc-related story, when Randy Cox brought out *The Dime Novel Companion* in 2000, he dedicated the book as follows: "For Edward T. LeBlanc without whose pioneering efforts this book would not be possible."

When Greenwood Press published the book, it had a retail price, I believe, of \$79.50, typical for Greenwood, whose academic-oriented books are generally high-priced. Today, its Web site lists the price at \$119.95, quite a bump in eight years. But what really shocked me was last week finding a new copy of the book listed on eBay by a third-party vendor for a "Buy it Now" price of \$191.03!

Now, this book is nearly as valuable to me in my job as *Newsboy* editor as Bob Bennett's Alger bibliography. *The Dime Novel Companion* sits on my reference shelf less than three feet from my computer, and I reach for it



**A private tour of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello will be a special feature of the 2009 convention.**

## The Charlottesville Charivari

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Monticello reserved exclusively for convention attendees is on tap, to be followed by the annual banquet at the historic Michie Tavern (circa 1784) just down the road from Monticello. Our keynote speaker after the banquet will talk about Thomas Jefferson's book collecting habits, which he himself confessed bordered on mania.

Please refer to the Society's official Web site, [www.thehoratioalgersociety.org](http://www.thehoratioalgersociety.org) for a current convention schedule and directions for reserving a room at the Holiday Inn. More convention information will appear in future issues of *Newsboy* and on our Web site, but it already seems certain that the "Charlottesville Charivari" is not to be missed.

several times each month. But with Eddie's recent death, I began to think to myself: back in the 1940s and '50s he picked up dime novels for his collection for pennies apiece (they're worth very much more now). But to think that a reference book dedicated to him is being offered on eBay for just under 200 bucks must be bringing an ironic smile to his face up there in heaven.

Eddie LeBlanc made dime novels, story papers and series books relevant during his 42-year editorship of *Dime Novel Round-Up*, as did his predecessor Ralph Cummings and now, Randy Cox. Our hobby is much richer for the three of them.

But still, my fondest personal memory of Eddie LeBlanc remains the wonderful dinner we had that evening at Al Mac's Diner.

**Coming next issue:** our main convention preview!



# Beckoning at the Gate:

## *Horatio Alger, Jr. and the Literary Canon*

By Arthur P. Young (PF-941)

### Canons and Battlements

Welcome to the sometimes arcane world of literary masterpieces, national treasures, classic works, and canonical titles. Who confers these designations? Criteria used? Purpose of “best literature” lists? Place of juvenile literature in the elite repository of sacred texts? This essay will introduce the notion of the literary canon as a mechanism for recognizing the value of individual works of literature over the past century, and then overlay the writings and legacy of Horatio Alger Jr. on the various elements of the evolving American literary canon. And since an author’s reputation is often linked to his or her place in the pantheon of writers, understanding canon creation and its implications will empower students of literary theory, generational studies, and print culture with another analytical perspective.<sup>1</sup>

Defining the literary canon is our first task, one set forth by scholar Paul Lauter:

I mean by ‘the American literary canon’ that set of authors and works generally included in basic American literature college courses and textbooks, and those ordinarily discussed in standard volumes of literary history, bibliography, or criticism. Many such books are also available in widely marketed paperback series of ‘classics.’ Obviously, no conclave of cultural cardinals establishes a literary canon, but for all that, it exercises substantial influence. For it encodes a set of social norms and values; and these, by virtue of its cultural standing, it helps endow with force and continuity. Thus, although we cannot ascribe to a literary canon the decline in attention to the concerns of women in the 1920s, the progressive exclusion of literary works by women from the canon suggested that such concerns were of a lesser value than those inscribed in canonical books and authors. The literary canon is, in short, a means by which culture validates social power.<sup>2</sup>

Another scholar, Anne Lundin, amplifies the rationales for the construction of canons:

The canon’s main function is to position texts in relation to one another — and to exclude more than include. As a classificatory construct, the canon is a collection, much like a library collection. Despite its investment in perpetuity, a classic depends on changing standards of perceived

needs for educating the next generation. The canon is a political proving ground where its uses shift according to the rhetorical and reading audience. Our sense of what is “literature” is a product of ideological struggles for a selective tradition at work.<sup>3</sup>

Enshrinement in the canon confers prestige, literary gravitas, and often increased sales. Canonical titles heavily influence the contents of core curriculum courses in colleges and universities.

Moving from a general description of the literary canon to a discussion of the criteria used to identify canonical works, one can better understand canon formation, especially its strengths, flaws, and crosscurrents. Canonical works are usually debated in literary books and journals, and appear in anthologies. The earliest American literary history appeared in 1872 and the first scholarly anthology of American literature in 1919. Until World War I, the evolving literary canon emphasized works with a strong historical component. A connection with our historical roots became a major criteria for consideration and ultimately for selection. Not surprisingly, early admission to the canon was accorded to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. And by the Great War, literary scholars began to focus on the aesthetic dimension of literature, or, literature as belles-lettres. It was also during this period that professors of literature in colleges and universities consolidated primary control over the nature and selection of the American literary canon. Very few women, African-Americans, or other ethnic groups were chosen for canonical inclusion during this time.

During the ensuing decades various critics wrestled with the nature of the literary canon, especially the articulation of the criteria which should be employed for its construction. The great poet, T. S. Eliot, and others, weighed in on the debate in the 1920s. According to scholar Jan Gorak:

The early Eliot accepts only the validity of a canon he has first transported to a plane of almost visionary contemplation.... While acknowledging the cultural responsibilities of the modern critic, he also demands a criticism which fuses past and present, poet and critic, into a sustaining imaginative

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## Beckoning at the Gate

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order...Artistic works became canonical not by virtue of resemblance to the accredited monuments but by their participation in a continuously unfolding narrative pattern.<sup>4</sup>

Elliot's more demanding condition for a work to become canonical is a criterion which can be called a "transformative quality."

One of the prominent critics of the canon as it existed in the 1970s, Frank Kermode, confronted the notion that unanimous scholarly interpretation of a text is an important pre-condition for canonical status:

Kermode thinks that the canonical text has three constant attributes: it is hospitable to interpretation; it has sufficient depth to support a multitude of interpretations it attracts; and, as a direct result of these qualities it becomes charged with mystery. One of the qualities by which we recognize and respond to such a text becomes what Kermode calls 'patience,' a capacity for adjustment to the changing paradigms used to explain it.... Canons facilitate what Kermode sees as a basic human need, the need to reinterpret or re-imagine the past in accordance with the claims of the present. In this way, the canon of interpretation appears to Kermode as the classics appeared to the Italian humanists.... a set of admired patterns that stimulate perpetual reinterpretation by educated intelligences. Kermode's canon takes on the properties of a bridge and a prism in turn: like a bridge it brings separate territories together; like a prism he presents different meanings to the mind according to the angle at which its interpreter decides to view it.<sup>5</sup>

Roger Shattuck, Proustian scholar and winner of the National Book Award, defines a masterpiece as meeting simple, yet transcendent criteria:

I deal with the task of selecting books from the vast number put forward by tradition and by available anthologies. A classic that stands up through years of teaching will display a series of what I used to see as polarities. I now consider them to be complementarities. A classic will make its historical moment vivid and important; you will also have other features that make it remain contemporary. In other words it is at the same time a period piece and forever young. In my course I would cite Molière to illustrate the point; Shakespeare does so even better. A great work displays aspects that allow us to perceive in it a strong element of simplicity and clarity. It also awes us by the mystery and complexity it contains. We may well find it both reassuring and scary. A classic will create the sense of confronting concrete, individual situations and characters, which at the same time reached toward the domain of the general, the universal.... I would go so far

as to say that in this open, pluralist society, the core is not even given. We have traditions and institutions and conventions.... It seems more accurate to say that the past constantly offers a core tradition in the humanities, an offer each of us plays some role in refusing or accepting.<sup>6</sup>

Over the past four decades additional criteria have been introduced to canon determinations — colonization/decolonization, diversity, gender, and race. Oscillations and reassessments of the canon have continued for nearly a century. The canon is no longer an intuitive or providential concept, but one rooted in a continuing dialogue between scholar, critic, reader, and the momentum of history itself. Changes in publishing, the spread of paperback books, and the accessibility of her texts via the Internet have all influenced the literary canon.

By and large, the canon has become broader and more diverse. Vagaries in canonical status over the years clearly demonstrate the changing nature of the criteria and each generation's interpretation of them. For example, three 19th-century writers — James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, have enjoyed consensus status almost from the beginning.

One of the earliest acclaimed writers, Washington Irving, steadily declined in the number of appearances in anthologies and other literary works due to the heavily historical nature of his works. Herman Melville languished until the late 1920s and 1930s when several scholarly monographs catapulted Melville to the front rank. And if F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* was not immediately acknowledged as core literature, it has ascended to the pinnacle largely through the singular efforts of Matthew J. Bruccoli, a scholar who wrote about every dimension of Fitzgerald's career and amassed the preeminent Fitzgerald collection in the world.

Remember that the criteria identified in this section were developed for adult literature. Such criteria did not preclude the admission of juvenile works, but the door was most often closed to this genre. Bibliographers, scholars of children's literature, and librarians have been influential in the development of standards of excellence for juvenile literature. The American Library Association, for example, selects and bestows annually the Caldecott and Newberry awards for the best writing and illustrations in children's books.

The first attempt at a century-long examination of outstanding juvenile books, 1827-1923, was issued by bibliographer Jacob Blanck in 1938 under the title, *Peter Parley to Penrod*. He consulted many distinguished librarians and collectors to arrive at his final list. It is a list of books which have remained favorites over the generations, and, if not read today, included for their milestone quality during the time of their initial popularity. Blanck hoped to achieve a portrait of America's reading tastes, a daunting goal which

many believe succeeded admirably.<sup>7</sup>

Alice M. Jordan, scholar and children's librarian at the Boston Public Library, was the first to identify canonical criteria in the prestigious children's literature periodical, *Hornbook*, in 1947. Jordan believed that *Alice in Wonderland* was the greatest children's classic because it excelled in the criterion of imaginative intensity. The quality of writing and the adoption of a book by more than one generation are also important.<sup>8</sup> In the 1980s the Children's Literature Association issued a list of 63 canonical titles with scholarly commentary on the rationales for inclusion. No cohesive canonical criteria were produced.

Any inquiry into the relationship of juvenile literature to adult canonical literature must begin with the status of literature for young people and its isolation from the established adult literary canon. Karin Westman reminds us that the formal term literature has excluded children's literature for a long time. Further, an examination of anthologies of children's literature reveals that most are organized by genre and then by chronology. Mapping the content of children's literature into such areas as alphabets, chapbooks, fairytales, etc. tends to mask the historical nature of some important children's books. Adult literature often considers both historical and ahistorical, whereas children's literature is a frequently viewed as ahistorical, unless a countervailing argument can be made.<sup>9</sup>

This separation between mass or popular culture and highbrow culture began to appear in the mid-19th century. The notion that the masses could not identify quality literature and other cultural outputs emboldened critics and the academy to assert increasing control over books and the arts. For more than a century, rigid boundaries demarcated quality culture from mass consumption culture, and this bifurcation resulted in the marginalization of children's literature from the academy and from being recognized as significant cultural contributions. The highbrow hijack would become formidable.<sup>10</sup>

### Seeking the Canon

As we move toward an examination of Horatio Alger, Jr.'s journey toward possible canonization, children's literature specialist Deborah Stevenson reminds us of the enormity of the challenge:

Recovery of a forgotten author always sounds like a wonderful idea; one takes a writer whose work, like a dropped stitch, fell out of its space, and knits it back into its row in the canonical garment. I use 'recovery' here to mean not just a return to print but a return to broad awareness of a book as indispensable, as, in short, a children's literature classic to be passed on to ensuing generations. A hypothetical version of recovery works something like this: a critic writes a brilliant new book on

Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), causing people to reassess its importance. The book is favorably reviewed not only in academic journals, but in "gate-keeper" periodicals such as *The New York Times* book review and the *New York Review of Books*. Other scholars find this work relevant to their own, and *Water-Babies* articles begin to appear in PMLA, contesting, restructuring, and expanding on the original pivotal volume.

At the same time, non-academics who have read the monograph's reviews and seen the author on the Today show exhibit heightened interest in *The Water-Babies* itself, buying it in greater numbers for their children. Soon, Spielberg's plans for a new live-action movie are announced, the book is repackaged with a flashy film tie-in (while the Norton edition steadily infiltrates universities), and the children and scholars of the 1990s rediscover the magic...and then pass them onto the next generations as treasures of their own childhood. It is an appealing picture but it is not going to happen.<sup>11</sup>

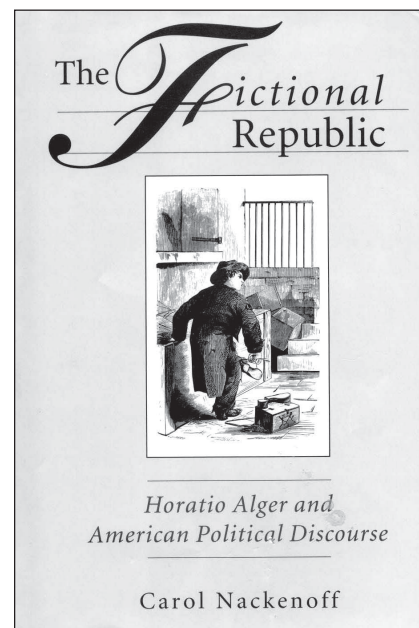
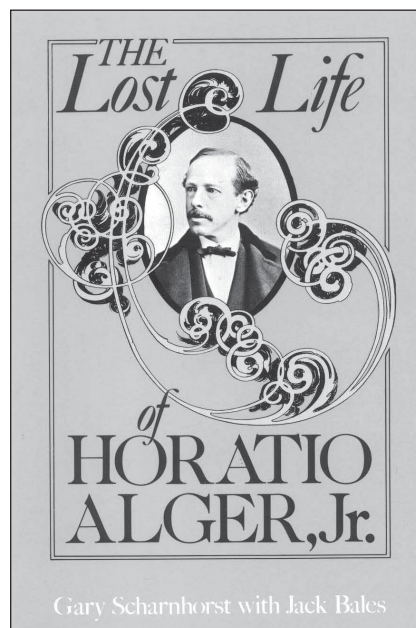
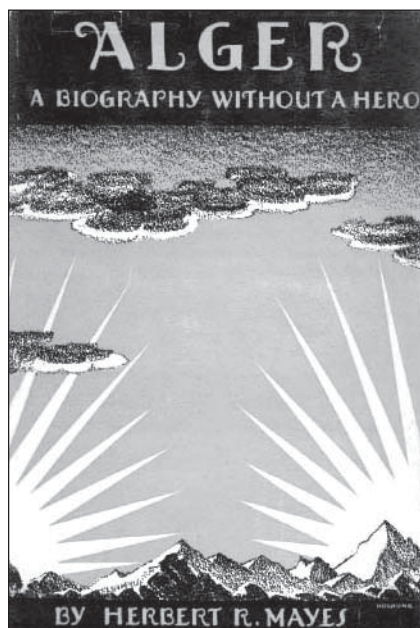
Selected canonical criteria are drawn from several of the authorities introduced earlier to measure Alger's standing in the canonical sweepstakes — historical dimension, aesthetic quality, generational appeal, sustaining imaginative order, appearance in later texts/media, diversity, gender, and race. It is important to note that many works have been selected for the adult literary canon without achieving the highest marks in all categories. And the voices through which these criteria are channeled include educators, librarians, critics, scholars, and readers. These, in turn, appear in histories, anthologies, biographies, literary companions, parodies, and public dialogue.

The first biography of Horatio Alger, Jr. was written by a young journalist named Herbert R. Mayes and appeared in 1928. Mayes portrayed Alger as coming from a domineering family, and who had several unrequited love affairs during his life. Alger never achieved his life goals of writing great adult literature and rising to a comfortable circumstance. Despite his efforts, Alger became a dull, hack writer. This unflattering portrait dominated social commentary and literary scholarship for at least 50 years. It took all of that time for the biography to be labeled a hoax. It is difficult to overestimate the protracted damage to Alger's reputation caused by this publication. Misinformation is drawn from this volume down to the present.

Seven more biographies followed the Mayes production. Frank Gruber, in 1960, was critical of some of Mayes' facts, but embraced them in other instances. John Tebbel's 1963 biography rehashed Mayes as did Ralph Gardner's bio-bibliography in 1964. Gardner even added new fictional narrative. The bibliography of Alger's works stands as Gardner's most durable contri-

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bution. Hoyt's 1974 treatment again rehashed Mayes, adding the salacious revelation that Alger was dismissed from his Brewster, Massachusetts, pastorate for homosexual activity with young parishioners in 1866.<sup>12</sup>

Gary Scharnhorst in 1980, followed by Scharnhorst and Jack Bales in 1985, offered sweeping correctives to early biographical treatments. Archival research and literary insights combine to produce the best reconstruction to date. There is an occasional shrillness to Scharnhorst's prose, doubtless propelled by the massive reevaluation needed, and a tendency to cite negative reviews of Alger's works. Recently identified reviews, heretofore uncited, cast a number of Alger's books in a more positive light. Carol Nackenoff's 1996 thematic monograph, *The Fictional Republic*, is a superb analysis of Alger's views on capitalism and civic responsibility. His stories and characters constitute an allegory of the American Republic. The current score card is one nearly incapacitating biography, two solid biographies and one excellent topical study. Again, the 1928 biography held sway for half a century without challenge and even today waits like the venus flytrap for the unwary.<sup>13</sup>

Favorable estimates of literary works are essential for canon consideration and for eventual entrance. Alger's early books, especially the *Ragged Dick* series, received very good reviews which played a significant role in launching his career. Over the years, there was a steady increase in laudatory reviews and also in carping reviews that noted either the formulaic narrative structure

of the stories or their somewhat unrealistic nature. Seen in political terms, Alger's positive and negative attributes were perennially in play.

*The Cambridge History of America Literature*, published in 1918, was the first major literature compendium to comment on the writings of Horatio Alger, Jr. First noting that his titles summoned "apt alliteration's artful aid," it went on to elaborate:

They told of bootblacks and newsboys, from systematic personal observation in the streets of New York City. His simple and invariable formula scored — by pluck and perseverance his hero rose single-handed to fame and fortune. The books of all three writers [Elijah Kellogg, William T. Adams, Horatio Alger Jr.] aroused admiration for sterling qualities; but the more sophisticated boys of a later generation began to complain that the Optic and Alger books were all alike, and conscientious librarians began to see that in them the element of luck was over emphasized.<sup>14</sup>

Mention of the librarians at the forefront of the crusade against many juvenile writers, particularly Horatio Alger and Oliver Optic, during the last quarter of the 19th century is important because the episode was remembered long after its active phase. The convergence of Victorian morality and an ascendant library profession prompted many articles and outcries for the banning of juvenile writers from public libraries. Although the rhetoric generally exceeded the success of the boycott, censorship of an author is surely detrimental to acceptance by the cultural elite.

Between Alger's death in 1899 and 1920, his books were reprinted by at least 50 reprint publishers and garnered sales far greater than during his lifetime. Comments



about Alger by classroom teachers were often dismissive. One exception was an article by a leading professor of literature at Yale, William Lyon Phelps, titled "The Virtues of the Second-Rate." Although at first appearing to be a snub of Alger and others, it was one of the earliest pieces to recognize the works of Alger and similar juvenile writers as critical enablers of literacy:

I do not believe the majority of these very schoolteachers and other cultivated mature readers began in early youth by reading great books exclusively; I think they read Jack Harkaway, and Old Sleuth, and the works of Oliver Optic and Horatio Alger. From these enchanters they learned a thing of tremendous importance — the delight of reading. Once having learned that, having found that a book, easily procurable, is the key to a happy recreation, they obtained a never failing resource of happiness. Once a taste for reading is formed it can be improved. But it is improbable that boys and girls who have never cared to read a good story will later enjoy stories by good artists. The Greatest Common Divisors are not corrupting youth; they are in many instances leading youth into the garden of literature.<sup>15</sup>

In 1945, critic Malcolm Cowley wrote that "Alger had no claim to literary merit." And then offered the frequently encountered lifeline that conflates Alger the writer with Alger the myth maker: "... still, reading his early books today, we can't help feeling regret for an age that, with all its bleakness, was somehow innocent and warm-hearted in its eternal pursuit of the dollar."<sup>16</sup> Eight years later Cornelia Meigs *et al*, published the seminal survey of children's literature, *A Critical History of Children's Literature*. Alger is accorded nearly a page of coverage and begins with the following estimate:

Alger wrote the same story over and over. His heroes, whether newsboy, shoe black or street musician, all climbed the ladder of success. He did not write well, but his books and their theme of the poor boys triumphal rise over obstacles through perseverance and hard work, suited the times. He was read by thousands, and the way the Horatio Alger hero has become a symbol of the proverbial "rags to riches" is proof of his wide popularity in his own times and for a generation afterward.<sup>17</sup>

By the 1970s, prominent scholar Hugh Kenner wrote that Alger was "the laureate of the paradigms of ascent" ... and "the most famous American writer since Harriet Beecher Stowe."<sup>18</sup> The growing acceptance of popular culture within the academy and the concomitant increase in interdisciplinary approaches produced important Alger scholarship in the 1980s and beyond. Michael Moon's 1987, "The Gentle Boy from the Dangerous Classes," focused on the complexities and subtleties of the Alger text, particularly the thematic impor-

tance of homoerotic relationships. His formulation significantly influenced Alger's presence in queer literature studies.<sup>19</sup> Glenn Hendler interprets the Alger narrative as a continuing dialogue about public space, which includes such elements as economic forces and literacy. The narrative's interface between writer and audience captures nuances that might be overlooked, a direction now followed by many scholars.<sup>20</sup> Shaun O'Connell has perhaps penned the best five pages about Alger the writer and Alger the myth maker as anyone. His rationale for Alger's compelling legacy:

The Gilded Age saw a radical democratization of American letters, led by New York voices. Voices from the street were heard: in particular, Horatio Alger and O. Henry composed modern myths of New York, a city that held its terrors, guaranteed melodrama, but sanctioned access to, even on occasion fulfilled its promise of, success and happiness. Popular literature thus extended the democratic government to include most New Yorkers. These and other writers gave the New York story new range, texture, and complexity. Their New York, a place insistently economic in its measurement of its citizens, was, as well, an Oz of romance and adventure.<sup>21</sup>

By the 21st century, Alger was receiving unprecedented coverage and critical affirmation in major literary compendia. *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, which appeared in 2005 under the general editorship of Sacvan Bercovitch, allocated 12 of its 812 pages to Horatio Alger, Jr.. Pre-eminent literary scholar Richard H. Brodhead offers an important re-estimate:

... Alger is able to produce highly individualized imaginative content within highly standardized forms. The virtuous boy promoted towards respectable status is Alger's tirelessly repeated formula. But caricaturizing accounts of the Horatio Alger "rags to riches" story scarcely do justice to the mix of ingredients that gives his works their power. His first and most successful book, *Ragged Dick*, combines Proto-realist reportage of the lives of the urban poor with an exemplary fiction of capitalist biography... and a strain of fairy-tale magic: Alger is a great author of the mysterious benefactor, downtown avatar of the fairy godparent. His mode of magical capitalist realism, as it might be called, is his own invention and one of the distinctive literary inventions of the American gilded age.<sup>22</sup>

Susan L. Mizruchi, Boston University, underscores the value of studying Horatio Alger. In discussing *Struggling Upward*, she offers an important insight:

But these manly little heroes were as needy as they were resourceful, accomplishing every task set up for them how-

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ever daunting and then returning to their mothers, or turning for comfort to one another in their orphaned or abandoned state. These forms of nurture had nothing to do with uplift; they were not satisfactions an Alger hero had to earn or be worthy of. They were given as an original endowment. It was his willingness to reach beyond the parameters of success in his books that make Alger's fiction worthy of literary study in their own right.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, in Blackwell Publishing's *A Companion to American Fiction, 1865-1914*; 2005, Sarah Way Sherman, University of New Hampshire, distills the essence of Alger's *Ragged Dick*:

*Ragged Dick* negotiates the issues raised by social mobility and misrepresentation through its implication that Dick's transformation is not a change in his essential character, which was good to begin with, but a refinement of that character. This idea of refinement eased anxieties about the process of social mobility, in which old identities seemed exchanged for new. Mapping the narrow path between commodity fetishism and deceptive misrepresentation, stories like *Ragged Dick* moralized self-refashioning as the foundation of American meritocracy.<sup>24</sup>

For Sherman, "Dick's make-over is a paradigmatic American moment," one that is endlessly reproduced in advertisements in newspapers magazines, television, and films.<sup>25</sup>

### Anthologies, Document Collections, and Readers

The extent and duration of an author's appearances in various compilations of literary works are significant aspects of the canonical quest. Horatio Alger, Jr. is well represented in school and educational readers of the period. A recent article in *Newsboy* identified four such readers, with reprint variants, that include two of Alger's most famous poems, "Carving a Name" and "John Maynard."<sup>26</sup> Another recently identified reader, *Iliff's Select Readings for Public and Private Entertainment*, 1893, also includes "Carving a Name."<sup>27</sup> Alger appeared in these readers for some three decades in the company of such long-term luminaries as a John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Charles Dickens, and John T. Trowbridge. "John Maynard" also appears in two specialized volumes devoted to public speaking: *The Peerless Reciter* and *The Progressive Speaker*. Alger's poetry can also be found in many national general purpose compilations with such titles as *Crown Jewels, or Gems of Literature Art and Music*; *Gems for the Fireside*; *Our Favorites: Our Favorite Poets and Poems Old and New*; and *The World's Best Authors: Their Works and Photographs*.

*Famous Authors in the Best Literature of England and America* contains not only sample works of each author, but includes substantial biographical and literary commentary. This volume is the only early compilation with a prose snippet from *Ragged Dick*. Comments on Alger are certainly effusive:

As a writer of books at once entertaining and at the same time of a healthy and earnest character a parent cannot recommend to his boys a more wholesome author than Horatio Alger Jr. Mr. Alger always writes with a careful regard to truth and to the right principles. His heroes captivate the imagination, but they do not inflame it, and they are generally worthy examples of the emulation of boys. At the same time he is in no sense a preacher. His books have the true juvenile flavor and charm, and, like the sugar pills of the homoeopathist, carry the good medicine of morality, bravery, industry, enterprise, honor — everything that goes to make a true manly and noble character, so subtly woven into the thread of this interesting narrative that the writer without detecting its presence receives the wholesome benefit.<sup>28</sup>

For more than four decades, the Norton Literary Anthology(ies) reigned as the preeminent literary compilations in higher education. Now subdivided into several components, including a volume for juvenile writers, this prestige publication still does not include a sample of Alger's writings. Exclusion is far from total, however. In 2001, a selection from *Ragged Dick* was included in *Children's Literature: An Anthology 1801-1902*, edited by Peter Hunt. This collection is one of the best compilations in the field of children's literature. Alger is represented by a section from *Ragged Dick*. Five other compilations, historical and literary, reprint a portion of *Ragged Dick*.<sup>29</sup>

There are doubtless others to be found. Recognition of Alger's significance as a storyteller and social reformer is clearly on the upswing. It is ironic that Alger's most frequent appearances in readers and anthologies occurred in the last 15 years of his life and then again approximately 100 years following his death.

### Intertextuality and Other Stuff

Intertextuality refers to the introduction of prior textual elements into the current work. Intertextual encounters may apply to the printed text and to other forms of media such as the cinema. Horatio Alger Jr. may be preeminent among writers who are referenced by later authors in either a positive manner or derisively in the form of parody.

In Alger's case the "rags to riches" shorthand is much more commonly found than either textual references to the biographical or authorial Alger. A brief list of au-

thors adapting the Alger myth would include Jan Boorstin, Forrest Campbell, Robert Coover, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Gaddis, Robert Herrick, Arthur Miller, Henry Miller, Jane Smiley, Hunter Thompson, Luke Walton, and Nathaniel West. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and West's *Cool Million* are the best-known parodies. There are hundreds more! The Horatio Alger shadow is a long one, and extends to the present.

In addition to his significant influence on many other writers, Alger's own works have been issued by more than 150 publishers, print and online. Alger is represented in author game cards, board games, comics, dime novels, plays, posters, stamps, etc. Two organizations, the Horatio Alger Association and the Horatio Alger Society, carry the Alger name. The former group makes annual awards to successful individuals in all walks of life and maintains the largest private student scholarship operation in the nation. The latter is devoted to perpetuating the ideals of Horatio Alger, publishing a newsletter, and providing a forum for collectors of Horatio Alger, Jr.'s books and other series authors. Two widely praised lists of outstanding literature award an entry to Alger — *Ragged Dick* and *Tattered Tom* in Jacob Blanck's *Peter Parley to Penrod*; and *Ragged Dick* in the Grolier Club's *One Hundred Influential American Books Printed Before 1900*.<sup>30</sup>

The "rags to riches" phenomenon in American culture is pervasive, both the original myth of unbridled greed and the revised myth which correctly aligns Alger's texts more closely to the traits of character and luck. Alger bestrides the nation as its cultural barometer, invoked for the material progress of the nation and for the need to question that progress as an unalloyed good. There are thousands of textual references to successful persons as living the Horatio Alger life. He has become the benchmark for much of our socio-economic debate, occupying both ends of the continuum, from lack of progress to the sustained achievement of prosperity. Hence, prosperous times or individual success confirm the "rags to riches" potential, but the opposite conditions prompt "Alger is dead in America" headlines. His name has migrated from the literary realm to that of cultural icon. There is no other American writer whose name has become so commodified and embedded in our national identity. Ironically, it may be that Alger's very popularity activates the snobbery complex among some elite literary gatekeepers.

### Reflections

Americans love to keep score, produce top 10 lists, and give the thumbs up or the thumbs down sign. In this spirit, let's conclude with a scorecard on Horatio Alger,

Jr. and the canonists. The historical dimension of Alger's work is undeniable, and his works are used in hundreds of courses to study urban history and social reform. Yes, for this criterion. The aesthetic quality of Alger's writing does not soar into the realm of belles-lettres, but newer scholarship reveals more structure and sophistication than a cursory reading might suggest. This criterion is not sufficient for canonization at this time. His generational appeal for more than a century has been demonstrated time and time again. This criterion merits admittance. Sustaining imaginative order is a demanding criterion for it requires prolonged reader engagement at a high level of wonderment. Alger is too down to earth for this criterion and therefore does not qualify for admission on this element.

His appearances in later texts/media, or intertextuality, is extraordinary and that influence alone should drive further reassessment. Diversity is a concept applied long after Alger's writing. In terms of gender, he did write a cross-dressing novel, *Tattered Tom*. His racial characters are period stereotypical. His enveloping impact, literary and institutional, has been noted and clearly must be accorded greater weight.

Overall, Horatio Alger, Jr. merits admission to canon status along with the only other 19th-century juvenile writer already "inducted," Louisa May Alcott. There is an accelerating recognition of Alger's complex narrative message and iconic legacy, all leading to a more secure status derived from the enduring value of his many contributions.

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1. Scholarship on the canonical text is substantial. — especially the following monographs — Peter Carafiol, *The American Ideal: Literary History as a Worldly Activity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; Joseph Csicsila, *Canons by Consensus: Critical Trends and American Literature Anthologies*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2004; Jan Gorak, *The Making of the Modern Canon: Genesis and Crisis of a Literary and Idea*. London: Athlone, 1991; Paul Lauter, *Canons and Contexts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; Anne Lundin, *Constructing the Canon of Children's Literature: Beyond Library Walls and Ivory Towers*. New York: Routledge, 2004; and Kermit Vanderbilt, *American Literature and the Academy: The Roots, Growth, and Maturity of a Profession*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.

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3. Lundin, p. xvii.

4. Gorak, p. 79.

5. Gorak, pp. 157, 182

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17. Cornelia Meigs, Elizabeth Nesbitt, Anne Eaton, and Ruth Hill Viguers. *A Critical History of Children's Literature*. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953): 239.

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30. See note 7; *One Hundred Influential American Books Printed Before 1900*. New York: The Grolier Club, 1947.

# Odd One Out

## *Annabel*; or, Suzanne Metcalf's unexpected homage to Horatio Alger

By Sean P. Duffley

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(Second of two parts)

### Patronage System

Horatio Alger often projected an idealized version of himself into his tales in the form of a patron or benefactor. Sometimes this is a wealthy young intellectual suffering from some physical limitation or malady (such as Mr. Cameron in *Herbert Carter's Legacy* or George Melville in *Do and Dare* [1884]), but more often a wealthy businessman (the literal embodiment of capitalism) who himself has risen from poverty and thus identifies with the hero (e.g., Mr. Whitney in *Ragged Dick*). The patron in Alger is a sort of fairy godfather figure, who assists the hero in his education and career, thereby effecting his transformation from poor, down-on-his-luck boy to comfortably bourgeois young gentleman.

In *Annabel*, Baum offers up three different patrons for the deserving Will Carden (or, as the *Record-Herald* reviewer observed, echoing the familiar metaphor, "several men ... stand ready to play fairy godfather" to hero Will). The first, Doctor Meigs, is an old friend of the family who exhorts the boy to be industrious as well as studious, steering Will on the path back to middle class respectability. ("But you're going to be more than a mere laboring man when you grow up ... I don't mean to let you get into those beastly mills" [41-42]). Doctor Meigs does not offer a hand-out, but instead provides advice and capital to start a small business that slowly prospers. Later, when Williams requests information on the boy who has rescued his daughter, Doctor Meigs vouches for Will's good character; this recommendation leads to an important face-to-face meeting with the steel magnate.

Typically in Alger, a heroic rescue or other selfless act brings the hero to the attention of the patron. As one



Alger hero Philip Brent greets his patron-benefactor, the wealthy businessman Oliver Carter, during a key scene in *The Errand Boy* (A.L. Burt, 1898).

critic aptly describes it, "the philanthropist operates only when virtue presses its spring."<sup>24</sup> In *Annabel*, Will selflessly rescues Annabel Williams from nearly drowning in an ice pond, an incident that not only leads to his special relationship with Annabel but also brings him to the attention of her father, a steel manufacturer who is the wealthiest man in town — and who also confesses to his humble beginnings shoveling coal at the same age as Will (68). Thereafter, Mr. Williams stages a private meeting between the youngsters, thereby providing his tacit seal of approval to their "friendship" — in contrast to the objections earlier expressed by Mrs. Williams about her children consorting with a "vegetable boy."

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*An earlier version of this article appeared in the International Wizard of Oz Club's official journal, The Baum Bugle 51:1 (Spring 2007): 32. Reproduced with permission.*





**Will Carden's selfless rescue of Annabel from an ice pond is a key incident that brings the hero to the attention of her wealthy father.**

Image courtesy David Maxine and Hungry Tiger Press

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In a twist upon Alger, Baum casts the equivalent of Alger's squire, Mr. Williams, in the role of a second patron, rather than in the part of the villain. For purposes of plotting, Baum needed to place Mr. Williams above all blame in order to intertwine Williams's daughter in a romance with the hero. Baum therefore takes pains to reassure the reader of Williams's basic goodness ("His only fault is that he makes more money than any one man is entitled to" [71]) even though his willful blindness to Jordan's obvious fraud ("the only thing that puzzled me is why [John Carden] transferred such a valuable secret, just as it was a proven success, to a man he could not possibly have borrowed money from, because [Jordan] never had it to lend" [65-66]) is a difficult one to swallow.

While one critic discerns a strong homoerotic undercurrent to the lucky break that brings the attractive young Alger hero to the attention of a generous older gentleman,<sup>25</sup> others have emphasized the inherent contradiction in Alger's preaching the core values of the Protestant work ethic (success achieved through steady, diligent application) on the one hand, yet on the other consistently depicting his heroes attaining success primarily through fortunate encounters with the wealthy and powerful.<sup>26</sup>

Carol Nackenoff reconciles the latter view by suggesting that the Alger hero serves an apprenticeship of sorts in the school of hard knocks, which makes him both ready for and deserving of success:

Alger *makes* fortune help heroes who are already helping themselves, not waiting for fortunes to drop from the sky. The undeserving lose fortunes. Gifts and legacies arrive only after the hero has manfully struggled and proved his mettle in the world. Even in those few cases where the hero attains great wealth, his windfall comes *only after* he has become comfortable through his exertions. Lasting well-being is never accidental or merely inherited. (Nackenoff, 141)

Baum appears to subscribe to this model of success in *Annabel*: Will's introduction to Mr. Williams does not immediately result in a golden opportunity. Instead, Williams offers to assist him in the future if Will is ever in need. In the mean time, Will returns to the mushroom partnership he has slowly built up under the guidance of Doctor Meigs. Reflecting on the gradual change in his fortunes, Will rejects the thought that luck has played any role: "[H]e was too wise to attribute it to 'luck,' knowing full well how much he owed to the kindness of Doctor Meigs, backed by his own sturdy labor and a strict attention to the details of his business" (122).

### The Errand Boy

Alger heroes routinely undertake literal journeys that parallel their metaphorical growth into manhood. The impetus for travel is the business (personal or professional) of the patron, but invariably the hero discovers something crucial about his past which leads to recovery of a lost fortune (e.g., seeking out a patron's wayward nephew, the title character of *Hector's Inheritance* resolves the mystery of his lineage and proves his entitlement to his late father's estate). Frequently, the journey places the hero in mortal danger: in a late Alger work, *Frank Hunter's Peril* (1896), the hero's stepfather sends him on a European trip with a shady "friend" who is actually a hired assassin. Baum wisely avoids this element so typical of the sensation novel.

In *Annabel*, Williams and Meigs continue to compare



notes on their suspicions regarding Jordan over the course of several months. Finally, they summon Will with a proposal to investigate a rival English concern that has won a government contract with a steel sample bearing the same unique characteristics as those employed by Williams's foundry (and invented by Will's father). As Will Carden embarks on his mission as junior corporate spy, he again reflects on the role of luck versus effort in his success:

From "vegetable boy" to "special messenger to Europe" seemed like an abrupt transition, and often as he walked the deck he wondered if it were all a dream, and he would presently awaken in his bed at home. But then his better judgment would inform him that there was nothing so very remarkable in his good fortune after all. With a



The hero Carl Crawford's triumphant return home to his ailing father in Alger's *The Odds Against Him* (Penn, 1890). Illustration by J. Watson Davis for the A.L. Burt reprint edition, titled *Driven From Home*.

good friend such as Doctor Meigs, a fortunate opportunity to save the life of a millionaire's daughter, and the inheritance of an honorable name, much more than this might happen to a young fellow. (129)

Baum likely had tongue planted firmly in cheek in penning the above passage, which reads as an ironic commentary on the role of lucky breaks and coincidence in so many Alger novels. As presented by Baum, the change in Will Carden's fortunes has not been abrupt; nonetheless, the chain of events is improbable if not fantastic. Baum again reconciles the apparent contradiction between the role of luck versus the hero's own efforts by analogizing from an adage to the effect that "sterling worth is a magnet that frequently attracts [good luck]" (129). Thus, the hero succeeds not simply due to luck, but rather because his own merit has brought luck his way.<sup>27</sup>

In London, what initially appears to be an odd subplot involving a dinner invitation from Mrs. Williams proves to be yet another crucial coincidence for the hero. While Will frets over his lack of appropriate attire for the dinner, a wealthy stranger comes to his rescue with a referral to a tailor for a new suit of clothes. (In Alger, the receipt of new clothes marks another symbolic rite of passage as the Cinderella hero transforms into the image of a young gentleman). The same stranger, an industrialist, is the key to bringing to light Jordan's treachery — and to solving the mystery of the disappearance of Will's father. In this case, the fairy godfather is, quite literally, Will's long lost father John Carden. Duped by Jordan into believing that his wife and children had drowned years before on the voyage to join him in England, Carden in the intervening years had made a fortune from his steel process. (This twist also echoes the conclusion of Alger's *Herbert Carter's Legacy*, in which a departed father's invention provides the key to a hero's enrichment.)

His family's fortunes restored, Will's future is assured and he plans to continue his education. The prospect of a union via marriage between the Williams and Carden families seems foregone at the conclusion of the novel.

### The Odd One Out

The most significant deviation *Annabel* makes from any of the Alger formulae is the overlay of a domestic drama focusing on Will Carden's courtship of Annabel Williams. Unlike Baum, who favored female heroines in his Oz books as well as in many of his pseudonymous efforts, Alger had an obvious predilection for boys, and only infrequently featured girls as protagonists.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Alger rarely ever alluded to courtship or romance.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, to the extent Alger depicts intimate emotional

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attachments, they are most likely to have homoerotic overtones.<sup>30</sup> To assure wary parents that the romance depicted in *Annabel* was perfectly appropriate for the consumption of impressionable youth, Reilly & Britton's advertising campaign for *Annabel* stressed that "[t]he Love thread has 'no beginning and no ending,' but its subtle existence between the lines appeals to the noblest instincts of boy or girl" (*Publishers' Weekly*, 305). For the modern reader, this "subtle" storyline is a non-starter, so tentative does Will's courtship of his "old chum" prove to be.

The Will-Annabel subplot comes across as an awkward afterthought primarily because Baum pays scant attention to Annabel. While the primary narrative arc follows Will's journey from rags to riches, in order to satisfy his 1905 contract's requirement that he deliver a "Novel for Young Folks," Baum needed a female lead character to appeal to girls as well as a slightly more sophisticated plotline than he generally offered in his juveniles. Thus, Baum grafted a romance onto the framework of his Alger-inspired story — a model that itself already was an outdated one.<sup>31</sup>

Annabel's primary function is to serve as a catalyst connecting the novel's three leading males (Will, Doctor Meigs, and Mr. Williams). Annabel first serves as damsel in distress to Will, whose selfless rescue of her from the ice pond creates the crucial nexus between the hero and the patron who will later assist him.<sup>32</sup> Subsequently, she serves as confidante and counselor to Will and her father. But Baum doesn't quite know what to do with Annabel thereafter: she is packed off to finishing school (like Baum's own sisters) in Chapter 8, and does not reappear until Chapter 15. At that point, she provides minor assistance to her father in unraveling the mystery.

In the novel that bears her name, Annabel Williams is the odd one out — the piece that doesn't quite fit. In the first chapter, the narrator announces that Annabel is the "odd one" (13) of her family. Initially, Annabel's oddness is defined purely by her appearance — the red hair and freckles that her mother finds ugly. (The same physical traits would serve to define the uniqueness of heroines of such later works as *Anne of Green Gables* [1908] and *Pippi Longstocking* [1945].)

Subsequently, Annabel's oddness is defined by the precocious wisdom she begins to display following her near-death experience. The fall into the ice pond causes not only Will to look at her in a romantic light ("Will looked at her with sudden interest. He had

never before noticed how bright and fair Annabel's face was" [78]), but also inexplicably to seek her assistance with his studies and finances. Mr. Williams also regards Annabel differently ("[I]t did not take him many days to decide that Annabel, especially, was growing into a very sensible and reliable little woman" [90]), even heeding her advice to build a new school for the town. Yet the supposed "change" in Annabel fails to register on the reader, who has barely seen her prior to her accident.

The narrative's emphasis on Annabel's wisdom ("It was not so easy to explain how so much real wisdom came to lurk in Annabel's childish head" [86]) harkens to Princess Ozma in *The Marvelous Land of Oz* [1904] ("although [Ozma] was so young and inexperienced, she ruled her people with wisdom and justice" [277]). It also suggests such earlier Dickensian child-women as Agnes Whitfield in *David Copperfield* (1850). Moreover, the new-found closeness of Annabel and Mr. Williams hints at the father-daughter relationship in James's *The Golden Bowl* (1904), where the intensity of the bond between Maggie and her industrialist father, Adam Verver, ends up alienating their respective spouses.

In other ways, however, Annabel Williams is very much a throwback to an earlier era in which fictional females were uniformly depicted as pious, passive homebodies typified by Elsie Dinsmore, the protagonist of a series of girls' books by Martha Finley.

Toward the end of *Annabel*, our not-quite-heroine approaches the Elsie Dinsmore type of female prig in harping to her father about the "hand of God" (160) being apparent in the series of coincidences that reunites Will Carden with his long-lost father and restores his family's fortunes. Mr. Williams, a wealthy man of the world, is initially dubious, but thereafter even he seems to concede his daughter's point. Katharine Rogers aptly observes that this is a rare instance of Baum interjecting a pious tone in his writing.<sup>33</sup>

Annabel Williams stands in stark contrast to the active, spirited Jo March of *Little Women*, a character seen as a breakthrough at the time of that work's original publication. Alcott's work would influence subsequent generations of writers in their depictions of girls' lives. Alcott also served as the inspiration for *Aunt Jane's Nieces*, issued simultaneously with *Annabel* and marketed as a book about "real girls" and "full of real girl doings" (*Publishers' Weekly*, 305). Annabel Williams is all the more remarkable a creation in view of the fact that Baum so often centered his works on strong, forthright females (such as the plucky Dorothy Gale or the brave and bold Orissa Kane, heroine of his later Flying Girl series) who are active *doers* rather than mere dispensers of advice to men.



As Angelica Carpenter notes, the development of girls' series coincided with new gender constructs as women and girls enjoyed new freedoms, leaving the home — and even forsaking finishing school — in favor of work or varied activities formerly the province of men.<sup>34</sup> Given these trends, it is scarcely surprising that in its 1906 review of *Annabel*, the *Record-Herald's* critic responded so negatively, citing the novel's flawed, archaic characterizations as not ringing true.

Michael Patrick Hearn has suggested that Baum had "high expectations" for *Annabel*.<sup>35</sup> Reilly & Britton's 1906 ad campaign for the book (with its emphasis on Annabel's "blossoming into womanhood" and only the barest mention of the Will Carden storyline that actually predominates) reflects that the firm wasn't quite certain what to do with this "Novel for Young Folks" named for a girl and attributed to a fictional female author. Reilly & Britton reprinted the first edition only once (in 1907), but immediate sales likely were not as promising as Baum's other pseudonymous effort, *Aunt Jane's Nieces*.

In 1912, Baum proposed that *Annabel* serve as the basis for a new girls' series.<sup>36</sup> Reilly & Britton may have considered this possibility, as it then reprinted *Annabel* for the first time in five years (even going to the trouble of resetting the text and substituting new illustrations by Joseph Pierre Nuytens for the plates by H. Putnam Hall).<sup>37</sup>

But the suggested series did not materialize. Instead, where Baum's pseudonymous efforts were concerned, the firm continued to focus on projects connected to his established Edith Van Dyne name, publishing a sequel to *The Flying Girl* in 1912, and thereafter working with Baum to launch the Mary Louise series in 1916.

The ultimate irony is that in 1906 Baum, under the economic pressure to produce a steady stream of novels sufficient to produce income to support his family, created an odd mishmash that is part girls' story and part homage to a boys' writer of an earlier generation whose own concession to economic pressure led him to produce a steady stream of formulaic novels. Similar to the fictional heroine whose name it bears, *Annabel* is best described as the "odd one" among Baum's large body of work.

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**Consistent with Reilly & Britton's ad campaign stressing the propriety of *Annabel's* love story, Will's courtship of Annabel is decidedly tentative.**

Image courtesy David Maxine and Hungry Tiger Press

## NOTES

23. The protagonist of *Phil the Fiddler* (1872) is an Italian immigrant, while the ethnicity of the hero of *Only an Irish Boy* (1894) is apparent from the title.

24. Nackenoff, 139 (quoting Clifton Fadiman, "Party of One," *Holiday* 21 [February 1957]: 6-14, 118).

25. Moon, "'Gentle Boy,'" under "'taking an interest': the Art of Saving Boys."

26. "Alger was all but incapable of actually showing the steady, sober advance he talked about so much. .... [Alger heroes] saved their money, but luck and patronage were the architects of their fortunes." Daniel T. Rodgers, 140.

*(Continued on Page 18)*



# Odd One Out

(Continued from Page 17)

27. At this late point, Baum seems to recognize the flatness of his hero when he cautions the reader: "lest you mistake Will for a paragon ... [he] had his failings" *Annabel*, 124. However, it's difficult to give credence to this assertion, as Baum never bothers to give his hero any flaws or to show him pondering any moral conflict.

28. Two notable exceptions are a rare Alger novel for adults, *Helen Ford* (1866), about a seamstress-turned-actress, and *Tattered Tom* (1871), whose street waif hero is actually a little girl in disguise. By the latter novel's end, young Tom metamorphoses into a young lady who is heir to a Philadelphia fortune. Baum would later explore similar themes of gender ambiguity and transformation in *The Enchanted Island of Yew* (1903), in which a fairy has adventures among mortals disguised as a knight, and, more dramatically, in the conclusion to *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904) when the boy hero is revealed to be the missing princess Ozma.

29. Exceptions are *Brave and Bold*, which concludes with specific note of the hero's engagement, and *Adrift in New York* (1904), which implies that the marriage of the two protagonists is imminent.

30. For example, *Do and Dare* (1884) and *Andy Grant's Pluck* (1902) each concludes with the adolescent hero happily establishing a home with a wealthy twenty-something benefactor. For further discussion of the homoerotic subtext in Alger's work, see the Moon article cited above, note 25.

31. One authority attributes the downfall of Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger and other nineteenth century boys' authors to the trend with the turn of the twentieth century "toward the study of adolescent psychology and adolescent citizenship [that] discovered something pernicious in action unaccompanied by reflection and analysis." Trent, *History of American Literature*, 404.

32. A rescue from an ice pond also has pivotal ramifications in *Little Women*. Unlike *Annabel*, however, the spotlight is not on the rescuer but on a spectator, Jo March, who anguishes after permitting her sister to skate on the thin ice. Alcott, *Little Women*, 97-103. As Baum's 1905 contract with his publishers confesses his familiarity with the works of Alcott, it's possible he drew inspiration from this episode.

33. Katharine M. Rogers, *L. Frank Baum*, 139.

34. Carpenter, "Man Behind the Curtain," 6.

35. Hearn, introduction to *Twinkle and Chubbins*, ii.

36. L. Frank Baum to Frank K. Reilly, 9 February 1912.

37. Despite the effort the publisher took to re-launch this title, the author's name was misspelled on the binding of the second edition as "Susanne" Metcalf. Reilly & Britton ran an ad for the new edition in other titles published in 1912 that specifically labeled *Annabel* a "girl's book." The ad (doubtlessly penned by someone who had not read the book in question) describes the heroine as "a lovable girl, but one with plenty of snap—her red hair testifies to that" and then provides a plot summary that all but gives away the ending.

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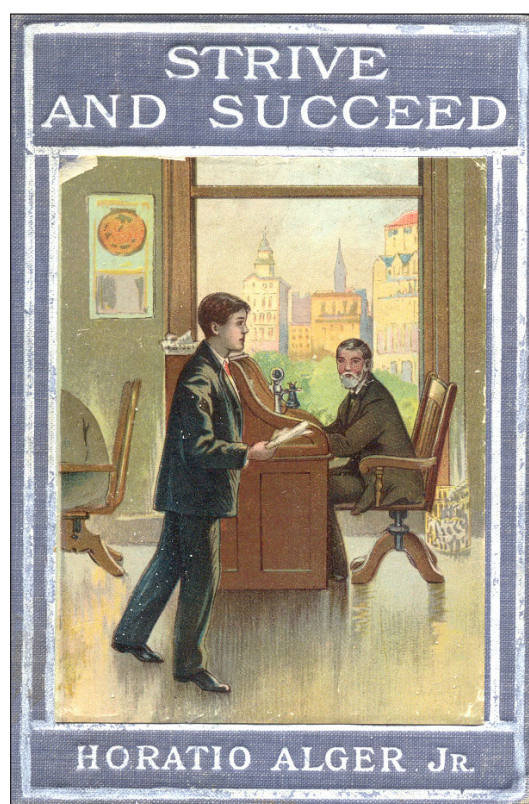
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