THE FAMILY OF GOD:

UNIVERSALISM AND DOMESTICITY IN ALICE CARY'S FICTION

A Dissertation

by

JANE M. GALLIHER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,   Dennis Berthold
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ABSTRACT

The Family of God: Universalism and Domesticity in Alice Cary's Fiction.

(August 2009)

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Until recently Alice Cary's works have gone largely unnoticed by the literary community, and those critics who have examined her writings have recognized her primarily as a regionalist sketch writer. However, studying Cary's total body of fiction, including her novels and children's fiction as well as her sketches, and examining the influence of Christian Universalism upon her work reveals that Cary is a much more complex and nuanced writer than she has been previously understood to be. This dissertation explores the way that Cary questions stereotypes of accepted behavior specifically as they pertain to the identities of men, women, and children and offers a more flexible and inclusive religious identity rooted in Universalist ideals.

In her depictions of women, Cary uses tropes from gothic stories, fairy tales, and sentimental fiction to criticize evangelical faith, Transcendentalism, and separate spheres-based stereotypes of women's

behavior, and she undermines these stereotypes and replaces them with a Universalist emphasis on communal service and identity. Similarly, Cary's depictions of manhood are influenced by her desire to dissect preconceived notions of masculinity like that of the Self-Made Man and his earlier counterparts the Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan and replace these stereotypes with a Universalist model that embraces gender fluidity and sacrifice of self interest for the larger community. Cary's treatment of children continues her critique of nineteenth century stereotypes. Cary, unlike most early nineteenth century writers, exposes the dangers of romanticized visions of middle class children, which physically isolated children from their families and endangered working class children by increasing the demand for child labor; thus Cary's Universalism leads her to depict all children, not just the wealthy ones, as God's children and worthy of protection. Cary also uses children metaphorically to represent minorities and tentatively question the treatment of African Americans and Native Americans. Cary stands as a prime example of an author who has been overlooked and whose obscurity has hindered the construction of literary history, particularly in regard to the antebellum roots of realism and the influence of liberal religious belief on realistic fiction.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the influence of Alice Cary's (1820-1871) Christian Universalist upbringing upon her presentation of the American family in her works of fiction, particularly her novels. While critics such as Wendy Ripley, Judith Fetterley, Marjorie Pryse, and Joanne Dobson have touched on Cary's depictions of family life, especially those of women and children, none have examined the importance of Cary's religion upon her writing, much less her stance on social issues. This absence of commentary is particularly surprising given Cary's predilection for quoting hymns, scripture, and other religious writings in her fiction. Instead, critics have tended to focus on Cary as a regionalist writer constructing a feminist dialectic that speaks on behalf of the oppressed (Fetterley and Pryse 38) or as a writer using the sentimental apparatus to empower women and undermine masculine authority (Dobson, "Reclaiming" 264).   As important and insightful as these criticisms have been, however, they are woefully incomplete in that they fail to address the relationship between Cary's

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This dissertation follows the style of the *MLA Handbook.*

faith and her critique of family, a relationship that is at the heart of Cary's central themes and the social commentary provided by these themes.

Cary's Background and Social Circles

Cary was an important figure in the literary community of New York and in the development of women's and regional literature. Immensely popular during her lifetime, Cary published three novels, five collections of short stories, and many poems. Her work was wide spread and familiar nationwide and appeared on a weekly basis in publications such as *Legacy,* one of the most respected literary magazines of the time period. Labeled by Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse as the first regionalist writer, Cary spawned one of the largest literary movements in post-Civil War America. She also had a wide social circle, which included famous political, business, and literary figures such as Fanny Fern, Horace Greeley, Susan B. Anthony, P.T. Barnum, and Julia Ward Howe. At the time of her death, Cary was numbered among the great poets of her time and was even studied by literature students in fledgling American literature university programs ("Scrapbook") while Herman Melville was identified dismissively by at least one newspaper reporter as "a writer of boys' adventure novels" ("Scrapbook"). However, within only a few decades after her death, Cary fell into relative

obscurity, and today very few literary critics have read Cary's works or, for that matter, even know who Cary is.

All Cary critics rely on the brief biography written by Cary's friend Mary Clemmer Ames, who based her account of Cary upon conversations with Cary herself; her sister, Phoebe; and Cary's personal friends. The purpose of Ames's biography appears to shape Cary into a sentimental heroine, and careful readers can easily doubt the veracity of some of the claims made about Cary, but the biography does offer some insight into Cary's early life, her emergence as a writer, and her motivations for writing. Cary grew up in the area of Mt. Healthy, Ohio, just nine miles north of Cincinnati and was one of nine children born to Robert Cary and Elizabeth Jessup Cary. During Cary's early childhood, this area was still considered the "West," and the inhabitants of Mt. Healthy confronted all the difficulties of frontier life, especially hard labor, poverty, illness, and death. Cary's life was touched deeply by these hardships. She states: "I don't like to think how much we are robbed of in this world by just the conditions of our life . . . But for fourteen years of my life, it seemed as if there was nothing in existence but work. The whole family struggle was just for the right to live free from the curse of debt" (qtd. Ames 19). So concerned was Cary's father by the debts against his farm that little time or funds were spent on more "luxurious" considerations such as clothing, healthcare, or

education.   According to Alice, "there was no time to study." Even in

the little time they did have for mental exercise, she and her siblings had

access only to the *Trumpet,* the Universalist newspaper to which their

parents subscribed, a small collection of family books (about ten or

twelve including the Bible, a hymn book, *History of the Jews, Pope's*

Essays, and *Charlotte Temple*), and the small, one-room "school district

house down the road," which apparently provided meager resources and

poor quality of instruction (Ames 19-22).

In her early adulthood, Alice published her first poem "The Child

of Sorrow" in the *Sentinel,* a Cincinnati literary magazine. She and her

younger sister Phoebe also published poems in the Universalist

publications as well as *The Boston Ladies Repository* and *Graham's*

Magazine. Her early poetry gained praise from such notable critics as

Edgar Allan Poe, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Horace Greeley, and with

the help of Rufus Griswold, Alice and Phoebe gained a publishing

contract for their first volume of collected poems for which they earned

one hundred dollars (Ames 24-26).

Shortly after the publication of this volume, both sisters moved to

New York where they were able to achieve significant success and

became able to support themselves solely through their writing. Cary's

personal life was marked by a remarkable degree of ingenuity,

resourcefulness, and independence. She never married, and after only

six years in New York, Alice and her sister Phoebe not only supported

themselves but they were able to buy a home outright to live in. Soon

after they moved to the city, their apartment became a hub for social

and political discourse. In fact, for fifteen years the sisters hosted

weekly salons every Sunday which were attended by notable literary

figures and social reformers ("Scrapbook").   Alice also actively worked to

promote the professionalization of women writers and served as the first

president of a group called Sorosis, the earliest women's professional

writing association in the U.S (Ames 28-30). On the surface, at least,

Alice, shunning both husband and extended family ties, was a far cry

from the "angel in the house" confined indefinitely to the private sphere

and dependent upon male family members for protection and support.

However, according to Ames, Alice went to extremes to present

herself as "feminine." Ames writes that shortly after the sisters' arrival

in New York, Alice and Phoebe made housekeeping and decorating a

priority:

> A man-genius seeking the city, as they did, of course would
>
> have taken refuge in a boarding house attic, and "enjoyed
>
> himself" in writing poems and leaders amid dirt and
>
> forlornity. Not so these women poets [Alice and Phoebe]. I
>
> have heard Alice tell how she papered one room with her
>
> own hands, and Phoebe how she painted the doors, framed

the pictures, and "brightened up" things generally. Thus
from the first they had a home, and by the very magnetism
that made it bright, cheery, in truth a home, they drew
around them friends who were their friends no less till they
breathed their last sigh. (33)

Drawing a contrast to male writers, Ames portrays Cary as the ideal
housekeeper and hostess. According to Ames, keeping up the
appearance of femininity and hospitality were not only important to
Cary, but this behavior also directly formed the basis for her lasting
relationships. Ames reaffirms these implications stating that "all Alice's
surroundings were dainty and womanly" (40) and that Alice kept their
dwelling "beautifully" and woke early in the morning each day for almost
twenty years in order to maintain the daily business of the home:
cleaning, cooking, and going to market (51).   Ames also states that
Alice was not formally involved in the abolitionist or women's
movements, but rather Alice was opposed to oppression in any form (33-
34). Ames's projections concerning Cary seem to be highly idealized, an
image of a woman who conformed to the dominant nineteenth century
stereotypes of femininity.

Nonetheless, other sources, including letters Alice wrote to her
friends and family, and even Ames' biography indicate that Alice was a
more extreme and complicated woman than this idealized persona.

Ames carefully underplays Cary's association with the more politically radical elements of American society, but in truth, Cary regularly kept the company of both abolitionists and suffragists, hosting in her home such notable personages as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and William Lloyd Garrison (Cary, "Letter to Unknown" and "Scrapbook"). Although Cary never made overt political speeches at public rallies, she used her influence as a well-known, popular writer to further numerous political causes. Her writings appeared in abolitionist and suffragist publications, and she edited collections which included works promoting the temperance, feminist, and abolitionist causes. At the time of Cary's death, she was even working on a novel titled *The Born Thrall* that was to be serialized in a suffragist newspaper. One feminist contemporary went so far as to declare that Cary's novel would do for women's rights what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for abolition (Haarsagar 418).

Cary's presidency of Sorosis also hints at her political interests and involvement. Although Ames states that Cary had to be coaxed into accepting the position, Alice's inaugural speech at the first meeting reveals her true investment in the organization. She states,

> You gentlemen, profess to be our representatives, to
> represent us better than we could possibly represent
> ourselves . . . Of our own knowledge, I have said, we are not

able to determine what special agencies you employ for your

advantage and ours, in your deliberative assemblies, for it

has not been thought best for our interests that we should

even sit at your tables. (Ames 79)

Alice clearly is critiquing the cultural environment in which she lived

and which dictated that women's choices be solely placed in the hands

of men, whether those choices be professional, social, or political. By

encouraging women writers to bind to one another for support rather

than relying on the "wisdom" of the male establishment which often both

took financial advantage of female writers and excluded them from

decision making processes and publishing honors, Cary was using her

position in the fledgling organization to help other women succeed in the

male-dominated field of writing and publishing.

Further, Cary's dogged work ethic reveals decidedly "unfeminine"

personality traits. Many modern critics attribute a large part of Cary's

death to her workaholic tendencies (Ripley 158). Confining herself to

her study after her household tasks, Cary did not take vacations. She

even wrote and published during her prolonged illness near the end of

her life. Ames writes that Cary's breaks and vacations were those

periods when she felt well enough to write. Phoebe described Alice as

having written nearly constantly until death literally took the pen from

Alice's hand (qtd. in Ames 52). While Alice's behavior denotes a rather

remarkable work ethic, it also reveals the depths of her rejection of traditional family values. She made very sure that she never had to depend upon male influences in her life to lead and support her. Further, Cary drew her younger sister into this lifestyle: the socially adept Phoebe never married despite numerous offers and instead chose to live with Alice and become a professional writer (Ripley 158).

Regionalist Criticism and Interpretation of Cary

Although mid and late nineteenth century newspaper articles indicate that Cary enjoyed widespread popularity and notoriety during her lifetime (scrapbook), with the onset of the twentieth century Cary and her works became nearly forgotten in the wake of her male counterparts such as Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Walt Whitman. On the surface this absence may appear to be due at least in part to the male-centered criticism by early critics of American literature, which shaped what we now term as the "literary canon." However, this supposition might not be entirely accurate. During the mid to late twentieth century when feminist criticism began to concern itself particularly with recovering lost, forgotten, or otherwise neglected writers, Cary was again ignored by most feminist critics. To this day, not one single book-length work of criticism or critical biography exists, and other criticism has been limited at best. In fact, all the criticism

written about Cary in the last twenty years would scarcely fill 200 pages, and most of that criticism is the product of Judith Fetterley, who almost single-handedly has revived at least meager attention to Cary.

Fetterley and most other critics recognize Cary as a "Regionalist." Of course, this is a contentious term, which has only recently been adopted by feminist critics.   First, it is important to note that "regionalism" denotes a different meaning for literary critics than it does for historians and political analysts. For the historian, regionalism refers to the assumption and promotion of regional identity for political purposes, but literary critics use the term to refer to a specific literary movement which began in the U.S. during the last half of the nineteenth century. The works that literary critics currently label as "regionalist texts" were originally identified as part of the "local color" movement. Early anthologies of Local Color fiction included such writers as Brett Harte, Sarah Orne Jewett, Charles Chesnutt, and Kate Chopin. This "genre" was generally considered a subset of realism, and an inferior one at that. Other early critics saw the genre as a transition between realism and naturalism, but possessing the power of neither. In 1933, Mary Austin in her essay "Regionalism in American Identity" became the first critic to identify "Regionalism" as a separate literary movement (Fetterley and Pryse 229). However, as Fetterley and Pryse note, most scholars did not adopt the term, leaving it virtually without "prior

cultural or literary meaning," which allowed the Southern Agrarians to adopt the term to describe the movement they began (229). In the 1980's, new definitions of the term began to take form as feminist critics turned their attention to examining the "local colorists" of late nineteenth century America. These scholars began to see a "distinct" genre of literature separate from the local color tradition of writers like Bret Harte. For these early critics regionalism came to denote writers who portrayed realistic accounts of a distinct region in the U.S., while the term local colorist was used for writers who employed dialect and quaint characters to present American regions as merely odd or exotic. Thus, regionalist criticism emerged as a subset of feminist analysis and became dominated by a feminist analytic. Despite this common distinction, critics disagree even today concerning the function, characteristics, and constitutive works within the genre.

Examining four of the most influential critical works describing regionalism – Amy Kaplan's "Nation, Region, and Empire," Fetterley's " 'Not in the Least American': Nineteenth Century Regionalist Writers," Stephanie Foote's *Regional Fictions*, and Fetterley and Pryse's *Writing Out of Place*—is a helpful starting point to understanding the critical dialog around the genre.

Amy Kaplan, in her essay "Nation, Region, and Empire," which appeared in *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, defines

regionalism as a movement that began after the Civil War in order to reinforce American imperialism. According to Kaplan, regionalist texts accomplish this feat by creating a nostalgia for a shared American heritage: "Much of this fiction expresses a Janus-faced nostalgia in which desire generated by a modern industrial society longingly projects alternatives onto the screen of the past" and these works "enact a willed amnesia about founding conflicts, while they reinvent multiple and contested pasts to claim as the shared origin of national identity" (242). Kaplan defines regionalism as consisting of works--mainly novels by popular male writers--about rural communities and written with the aim of proposing a shared national origin, which aids America in casting aside sectionalist allegiances in favor of a national identity. Key for Kaplan is the artificiality of this constructed identity and its purposeful forgetting of the past. Regionalism "contributes to solidifying national centrality by reimagining a distended industrial nation as an extended clan sharing a 'common inheritance' in its imagined rural origins" (251). Further, this constructed idea of America helps both to assert the superiority of white society over minorities, especially Native Americans and other races who stood in the way of the American impulse toward Manifest Destiny (242). Although Kaplan does emphasize that Regionalism has the potential to upset or expose class, racial, and regional inequality, ultimately even regionalist fiction written by women

and minorities serves to minimize those differences by positing them as part of the evolutionary past from which the mature nation has emerged.

In contrast, Fetterley, in her article "'Not in the Least American': Nineteenth Century Literary Regionalism," claims that regionalist writers were distinctly 'unAmerican.' Building on feminist theories concerning the construction of the American literary canon, Fetterley examines reasons for the marginalization and neglect of regionalist writers and claims that they were necessarily female writers who wrote about their communities and the creation of communal identities based on inclusiveness. Fetterley, building upon her own theories posited in *The Resisting Reader* and those of Nina Baym, argues that the dominant definition of "Americaness" emerged from male-authored texts such as "Rip Van Winkle," *Last of the Mohicans*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which espoused such values as masculine independence, self-reliance, and the domination of women and minorities. According to Fetterley, regionalist writers weren't "American" (in the sense that these women did not follow the accepted male models of American literature) because they created a "literature that Models a subjectivity attained by standing up for others, not on them" (878).

Foote in her book *Regional Fictions* draws upon the theories of both Kaplan and Fetterley. Like Kaplan, Foote posits regionalism as a

post-civil war movement aimed at reuniting a broken nation. However,
drawing from Fetterley, she describes regionalism as a literature that
speaks for the disenfranchised and stands in contrast to white,
patriarchal visions of American identity.   Borrowing from Kaplan's
conception of regionalism as a genre that imagines a shared national
origin, Foote claims that regionalists de-familiarize readers by placing
them in the strange, unfamiliar communities of regionalist texts, yet
simultaneously the regions represented by these texts (most notably
Sarah Orne Jewett's portrayal of New England and Gertrude Atherton's
portrayal of the California frontier in *The Californians*) are recognizable
as iconic landscapes of a distinct American identity. Thus, regionalist
writers create a sense of identity which invokes Americaness, but they
do so in a way that engenders empathy for the disenfranchised.

For their book, *Writing Out of Place*, Fetterley and Pryse draw upon
the earlier theories of Fetterley and create the most comprehensive and
widely accepted description of the genre. Fetterly and Pryse trace the
origins and critical reception of regionalist texts, as well as the history of
regionalist criticism. Regionalist texts, write Fetterley and Pryse, were
historically "dismissed as narrow" but, in truth, they stand in opposition
to "the dominant discourse," which they "threaten to reveal [. . .] as
equally 'narrow'" (64). The central aim of *Writing Out of Place* seems to
be a desire to develop a comprehensive description of regionalist writing,

yet Fetterley and Pryse put forward a very narrow definition of the constitutive works of regionalism. For Fetterley and Pryse, regionalist texts consist only of sketches written by women about the lives of women, with the dominant characteristics of such texts being the liberation of women's expression and empathy for the oppressed. Nonetheless, the book also expands upon the earlier literary critics' assumptions. While most earlier regionalist critics mark regionalism as a post-Civil War phenomenon which began in New England, Fetterley and Pryse hold that regionalism begins prior to the Civil War with Alice Cary, a fact which helps distinguish the genre as a distinct movement separate from the local color tradition which is associated most with post-Civil War New England (102).

The work of regionalist critics, especially Fetterley and Pryse, is indispensable to the study of Cary's works. First, since Fetterley and Pryse recognize Cary as the founder of an important literary movement in the U.S., regionalist criticism has reintroduced Cary to the literary world and spurred some scholarly interest in her writings, and in recognizing Cary as the innovator, if not the originator, of the sketch form, regionalist criticism highlights both the originality and the dissident nature of Cary's short fiction. Fetterley's promotion of Cary's innovative characteristics has even led to Cary being introduced into widely adopted anthologies of American Literature, such as *The Heath*

Anthology of American Literature and the seventh edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature.*

Despite the contributions of regionalist critics, the limited lens of regionalist criticism comes up short in truly revealing the density and scope of Cary's work. First, most regionalist critics who see the genre as beginning in response to the Civil War ignore Cary entirely, and regionalist critics such as Fetterley and Pryse, who recognize regionalism only in terms of the sketch form, typically cast aside the vast body of Cary's work. During her lifetime, Cary was recognized primarily as a poet, but regionalists casually dismiss her poetry as inferior or fail to mention it altogether, while her novels are seen only as formulaic fluff. Fetterley and Pryse comment that Cary's novels appear to be the work of a different author: "when we look at the novels, for example, of Cary, Cooke, Murfree, Freeman, Chopin, Austin, or even Jewett, we are struck by their difference from the regionalist fiction of these writers; they appear almost as if there were the work of a different writer" (170). Fetterley and Pryse maintain further that "women writing novels were in effect different subjects than those same women writing sketches" (170). Many regionalist critics, and even some feminist critics, hold that the novel form constrained nineteenth century female writers to cultural expectations of feminine concerns, namely stereotypes of femininity with which the true experiences of women had little in common (Baym,

Novels 258). Women's novels were thus subjected to expectations and prescriptions which practically straight-jacketed the writers' portrayals of their own reality and limited them to narrow conceptions of plot that were "culturally conservative, privileging heterosexual romance" featuring "young, unmarried, but marriageable, and excessively feminine" protagonists (Fetterley and Pryse 170-71). Accordingly, it is only in the relatively undefined sketch form that regionalist writers were allowed the freedom to address their own experiences (Fetterley and Pryse 167). However, in casting aside Cary's novels, these critics have ignored her most multi-textured works, which offer complex views of societal power structures, and by privileging the individual sketch these critics have failed to analyze any of Cary's sketch collections as a unit. Susan Sniader Lanser provides a more helpful view for understanding the value of women's novels, and by extension Cary's novels. Drawing upon both feminist and narrative theory, Lanser states that writers who want to challenge the dominant authority "are constrained to adopt the authorizing conventions of narrative voice in order, paradoxically, to mount an authoritative critique of the authority that the text therefore also perpetuates" (7). Texts, and indeed novels, by female writers often become double voiced or "dialogic," both upholding and subverting the dominant authority of patriarchal expectations (8).

Not only have regionalist critics generally ignored Cary's poetry and novels, but this branch of criticism, rooted as is it is in feminist criticism, has also ignored many of Cary's sketches which concentrate on the lives of men. Sketches like "The Moods of Seth Milford" and "Zebulon Sands," which call attention to the abuses of young men by their families, especially the female members, do not depict the overtly feminist themes of many of Cary's other sketches. Instead, these tales issue a more subtle challenge to existing power structures and deal with the hardships of masculine identity. Such works present an inconvenient image of femininity in regionalist collections that otherwise might be seen as groundbreaking criticisms of the abuses of women, minorities and children by white men.

Regionalism as a term for a distinct genre did not even exist until the twentieth century. Although regionalist critics make convincing arguments that regionalism did emerge as a distinct literary movement during the nineteenth century and that Cary's writing was integral to the beginnings of that movement, the body of Cary's writing cannot be confined to the narrow feminist definitions thrust upon it by most regionalist critics. A truer definition of regionalism might be found in the writing of Alice Cary herself. In the preface to *Clovernook*, first series Cary writes,

The masters of literature who at any time have attempted the exhibition of rural life, have, with few exceptions, known scarcely anything of it from participation, and however brilliant may have been their pictures, therefore, they have seldom been true. Perhaps in their extravagance has been their greatest charm. For myself, I confess I have no invention, and I am altogether too poor an artist to dream of any success which may not be won by the simplest fidelity. I believe that for these sketches I may challenge of competent witnesses at least this testimony, that the circumstances have a natural and probable air which should induce their reception as honest relations unless there is conclusive evidence against them. Having this merit, they may perhaps interest if they do not instruct readers who have regarded the farming class as essentially different and inferior, and entitled only to that peculiar praise they are accustomed to receive in the resolutions of political conventions. (vi-vii, sic)

Cary displays two primary goals for writing her first collection of fiction: to faithfully represent the region of the country in which she grew up and to show that the rural farming class was not "essentially different" from her audience, the literate inhabitants of urban areas. These goals seem to form the foundation for regionalist literature in general.

While these two goals appear to go hand-in-hand with the definitions created by critics such as Fetterley, Pryse, and Foote, who see regionalism as a conscious voice arousing sympathy for the "Oppressed," Cary's concern seems to be more a fidelity to creating a realistic portrayal of her region than it does a simple desire to combat gender, class, and racial inequality. Annette Kolodny notes Cary's ambivalence to the home of her birth. Kolodny sees Cary as drawn to the beauty of the frontier and the simplicity of its people, yet Cary is also repulsed by the bigotry and ignorance of the rural population (178-79). Similarly, Wendy Ripley notes that Cary at times "spoke of the region where she was raised with disdain, making it clear that she was from there but not of there" (156), yet she also fostered the image of herself as a poor "rustic" (154). Both Kolodny and Ripley's observations are useful in helping readers understand Cary's writings. Like the rural landscape Cary describes, the subjects of Cary's fiction are complex creatures, capable of a variety of responses to the community around them. Cary depicts a wide range of both male and female characters in her fiction, and while many of her works do illuminate the hardship and prejudice that critics typically regard as "victimized," her writing is just as likely to show members of those same groups acting in dishonorable ways and oppressing others, which establishes regionalism as a genre that has much in common with realism.

Regionalism's Sentimental Roots

Cary's regionalist writings owe much to the tradition of sentimental fiction as well. During Cary's lifetime and into the twentieth century, she was labeled as a writer of sentimental fiction. In the nineteenth century, this genre, along with most women's writing, was seen as trivial and unimportant for a number of reasons. Theorists like Baym in "Melodramas of Beset Manhood" and Fetterley in *The Resisting Reader* theorize that the devaluation of nineteenth century women's texts stems from women writers' subject matter, which is based largely on the domestic experiences of women. This subject matter differed greatly from the predominant myths of American identity and thus was ridiculed by the male-dominated literary establishment. In addition, male writers were threatened by competition with the growing popularity of women writers, especially those who wrote sentimental fiction. While Hawthorne famously complained, "America is given over to a damned mob of scribbling women," Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide, World* were becoming the best-selling novels of the century. Jane Tompkins notes that "the popularity of novels by women has been held against them almost as much as their preoccupation with 'trivial' feminine concerns" (xiv). Literary circles even today have often tended to view the popular writer as necessarily inferior or common—a view that is particularly troubling since celebrated writers

such as Whitman and Melville hail democratic principles and ordinary people, but "when the common man steps out of *Moby-Dick* or 'Song of Myself' and walks into a bookstore, his taste in literature, or, as is more likely, hers, is held up to scorn" (Tompkins xiv).

During the twentieth century, this view of sentimental fiction did not change much. Both Tompkins and Joanne Dobson note this tendency to ridicule sentimental fiction. Dobson writes that for literary critics, "sentimental writing is inherently false in sentiments and/or unskilled in expression. It is, quite simply, not literary" ("Reclaiming" 263), and this derision for sentimental fiction has not confined itself merely to formalist criticism. Dobson notes that even many feminist critics have viewed the genre "as a subliterature, as a moral philosophy, and as a hegemonic cultural discourse" ("Reclaiming" 264). Indeed, such feminist critics appear embarrassed by sentimental women's writing. It almost seems as if these critics have felt they must rescue the higher quality sentimental texts from the label of sentimentalism by labeling them as belonging to some completely different genre, such as regionalism. However, in doing so these critics are ignoring the potential strengths of sentimentalism. Dobson writes,

> Sentimental texts can be profound or simple, authentic or spurious, sincere or exploitative, strong or weak, radical or conservative, personally empowering or restrictive, well or

poorly written; they can adhere to the strictest limitations of stereotype and formula, or they can elaborate the possibilities of convention in significant ways . . . like other forms of expression – it can be used for good or ill, it can be transcendent or degraded. ("Reclaiming" 268-69)

With this understanding, sentimental texts need not be ignored or rescued. They can be read in the context of a wider literary tradition, a tradition that "is premised on an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal, and acknowledges the shared devastation of affectional loss" (Dobson, "Reclaiming" 266). This wider imagining which removes the expectation that women writers of quality must always speak up for the narrowly defined "Oppressed" in order to be considered worthwhile topics of study provides a helpful tool in studying Cary. The sentimental tradition's celebration of human connection and shared empathy appears to be at the heart of Cary's fiction, and indeed most regionalists texts.

Although Cary roots her work in realistic portraits of her region and does not present sensational, nearly superhuman feats like the famous Ohio River crossing in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Cary's works do display intimate connections to the sentimental traditions found in Stowe and other writers. For example, readers can easily find in Cary's fiction rags to riches stories like those of Maria S. Cummings's *The*

Lamplighter and Susan Warner's best seller *The Wide, Wide World.* Also, evident in Cary's fiction is a concern with the domestic, women's lives, and characters who, like Stowe's Little Eva, sacrifice themselves for the good of others. Tompkins notes that sentimental writers tapped into popular assumptions about domesticity, Christianity, and "true" womanhood in order to elaborate "a myth that gave women the central position of power and authority in the culture" (125). In this myth, females—especially children and mothers—provide moral and religious redemption through their purity of character and self-sacrifice (125-26). However, Cary's fiction, despite the surface appearance of such sentimental modes in her writing, presents a much grimmer reality in her fiction. Children die, and only *sometimes* these deaths lead the adults into repentance. Women surrender to passion and pay gruesome costs, and at other times in Cary's fiction, women maintain themselves as paragons of virtue only to be abandoned or suffer loveless marriage and lives of servitude. While on one level, Cary seems to have much in common with the sentimental writers of her time period, her fiction clearly works in marked departure from the sentimental formulas of writers like Cummings, Warner, and even Stowe.

Cary the Universalist

For Cary, the sentimental emphasis on feminine community and the power of empathy would have resonated powerfully, as would the sentimental ideals of self-sacrifice for one's family or community, but beyond these themes, Cary's attraction for sentimental formulas appears to end. Unlike Stowe and other female sentimental writers, Cary does not employ sentimental tropes and language to celebrate a myth of women's power, but rather she highlights many forms of oppression and points to a religious alternative. While most frontier children were typically raised in evangelical homes, Cary's early religious and moral education, according to Ames's biography, was provided by Universalist teachings. Therefore, Cary's religious alternative is not the evangelical Christianity at the heart of most sentimental works. Tracy Fessenden notes that in the nineteenth century, this type of connection between sentimental fiction and evangelical Christianity was the norm. In fact, this association became so common that sentimental writers of the period almost universally represented "Christians" solely as evangelicals, while other denominations of Christianity such as Catholics, newly formed sects like Unitarians, Universalists, and Mormons, were rendered nearly invisible as variants of "true" Christianity. Either these denominations were depicted as a demonic threat like the Catholics, or they were simply dismissed as heresy. Further, this religious blindness

came to extend much further than just sentimental writers. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the term Christian began to become nearly synonymous with evangelical and this assumption is even a common generalization in today's American media (94-95).

The friction between evangelical teachings and practices and Universalists, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, was quite pronounced. Having emerged from a liberalized form of Calvinism, Universalists publicly rejected and openly criticized the evangelical doctrines of Arminian theologians and preachers, who were characterized as irrational "soul hunters," and instead embraced the concept that a sovereign God, rather than a person's individual choice, led people to repentance (Bressler 56).

Universalism was highly influenced by the Enlightenment's emphasis on rationalism: "Reason, Universalists argued, dictated that a benevolent God would redeem all of creation" (Bressler 9). Drawing upon comparisons to "imperfect" human parents to a divine and perfect Father, Universalists reasoned that if human parents could not conceive of turning their own child into the torturous world of hell described by Evangelicals and earlier Puritans, then God, as a perfect being and perfect Father, would never condemn any of his children to eternal suffering. This belief in both God's fatherhood and the universal

salvation of all people was at the heart of Christian Universalist teaching.

In addition to believing in the universal salvation of mankind, the denomination emphasized the fatherhood of God, "brotherhood" of all people, and subsequently, personal responsibility to the human race. According to Ann Lee Bressler, Universalism has its roots in Edwardsian Calvinism. Universalism owed much to the teaching of Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards who "did not believe that the individual, self-determining soul existed" but rather emphasized God's sovereignty—a sovereignty that opened the individual soul to God's grace and transformed human character. Edwards also shunned the growing influence of Arminian theology that emphasized individual morality and choice; instead, he believed that just as gravity drew and held atoms together, God's love drew all men together, so "the saint was loved less for his individual excellence than for his harmony with the greater whole" (Bressler 10). This emphasis on community rather than the individual stood in stark contrast with the Arminian theology that gave rise to the evangelical movement, since "the 'guiding spirit' of Arminian social thought was a basic individualism, which saw the community's welfare as best served by the individual pursuit of happiness" (Bressler 13). Thus, Calvinism, as envisioned by Edwards, presented a near reverse of the Armininian beliefs. Rather than claiming that

communities prospered when individuals worked to improve themselves, Calvinism emphasized that people found fulfillment by concentrating not on their own soul, but the needs of the community (Bressler 13). In addition to rejecting evangelicalism, Universalists also ridiculed Unitarianism, and were especially resistant to the Transcendentalist movement which arose out of Unitarianism. For modern scholars familiar with the Unitarian Universalist denomination, this tension between the denominations would be surprising, but it was not until 1961 that the two denominations actually united officially. In the nineteenth century, the two movements formed distinct organizations. While both the Unitarian and Universalist churches "shared significant elements of belief—and disbelief—they represented two quite different, even opposed, strains in American religious culture" (Bressler 4). According to Bressler, Unitarian teachings emerged from liberal Arminian theology and rationalism that held that humans were created in the likeness of God and had the responsibility to maintain a moral life. In contrast, Universalists emphasized God's compelling and universal love which overwhelmed humanity and led individuals and communities into pious reverence for God and humanity. Thus, while Unitarians emphasized that humans were too much like God to be eternally condemned, Universalists emphasized that God was too perfect to allow humans to be condemned (Bressler 5-7).

Similarly, Universalism shared much in common with the Transcendentalist beliefs of Emerson, including the belief that the natural order of the world brings suffering to those who do wrong, the belief in a form of predestination, and a belief in universal salvation (Bressler 49). Nonetheless, the differences between Universalist belief and Transcendentalism were much more profound than even those between Universalism and Unitarianism. Emerson's pantheistic understanding of the divine, which drew inspiration from a number of world faiths in addition to Christianity rather than a dependence upon Biblical interpretation and an understanding of God as Father, was a major conflict between the two belief systems, as was Transcendentalism's "denial of any authority outside the individual" (Bressler 50). This utter rejection of God as father led Universalists into direct conflict with Transcendentalist philosophies and spurred the writing of a number of anti-Transcendentalist writings and sermons among Universalist leaders (Bressler 52). Cary's writings also reject these Transcendentalist teachings and demonstrate that humans espousing what she viewed as self-centered philosophies become isolated and corrupted.

The emphasis upon communal piety mingled with the rationalist conclusion of universal salvation to outline the core beliefs of the Universalist denomination. The "Winchester Profession," the earliest

coordinated statement of Universalist faith outlines the faith's principle beliefs:

> We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

> We believe that there is one God, whose nature is love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

> We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.

In addition to their principle belief in the eternal character of God and the final restoration of all mankind, the Winchester Profession also emphasizes the role of personal behavior and service. According to this statement of faith, people can only achieve true happiness when engaged in service to others. Further, however, this statement expands upon this connection using the repetition of "holiness" and "happiness" to hint at a utopian vision which involved human action and would aid the spirit in uniting the family of God. Later, Adin Ballou, a nineteenth century Universalist reformer, added to this statement of belief outlining

the principles of personal righteousness and social order inherent in

Universalism. According to Ballou, personal righteousness is linked to

the following attributes:

      1. Reverence for the Divine and spiritual.

      2. Self-denial for righteousness' sake.

      3. Justice to all beings.

      4. Truth in all manifestations of mind.

      5. Love in all spiritual relations.

      6. Purity in all things.

      7. Patience in all right aims and pursuits.

      8. Unceasing progress towards perfection.

This list is premised upon God's fatherhood and the "blood" connection

of all humans regardless of race, class, gender, or creed. However,

Universalists also viewed humans as naturally selfish. It was only

through God's grace and universal salvation that God transformed

"human affections and [turned] naturally self-centered human beings to

the love of God and the greater creation" (Bressler 9). Thus,

Universalists emphasized the power of God to transform the obedient

and thereby transform the society at large. Although the "Winchester

Profession" and Ballou outline a utopian vision for a society in which

Christians embrace this prescription for personal righteousness to

create a society that is just, early universalists did not emphasize social

activism, but by the time of Cary's childhood and early adulthood, the denomination was increasingly coming to emphasize personal development through service to the community and moral activism. Universalists worked in a number of social causes including prison reform, abolition, women's rights, and universal education (Bressler 77).

Perhaps one of the strongest influences on Cary is the feminist leanings of early Universalist female speakers, foremost of these being Judith Sargent Murray who along with her husband John helped to establish the denomination in the United States. These early feminists questioned the differences between men's and women's minds and natures:

> Yes, ye lordly, ye haughty sex, our souls are by nature *equal* to yours; the same breath of God animates, enlivens, and invigorates us; and that we are not fallen lower than yourselves, let those witness who have greatly towered above the various discouragements by which they have been so heavily oppressed; and though I am unacquainted with the list of celebrated characters on either side, yet from the observations I have made in the contracted circle in which I have moved, I dare confidently believe, that from the commencement of time to the present day, there hath been as many females, as males, who, by the *mere force of natural*

> *powers,* have merited the crown of applause; who, *thus*
>
> *unassisted,* have seized the wreath of fame. (Murray 134)

Murray in this passage calls upon her Universalist belief in God as the father and creator of all humans. Thus she declares to the male readership that women are the mental equals of men and should be treated as such. Murray goes on to advocate equal education of women so that women's minds will not be consumed with trifling or destructive thoughts but rather consumed with the appreciation of God. Cary's fiction follows a similar vein of thought. She demonstrates amply in her depictions of men, women, and children that perceived gender specific behaviors are really the products of social conditioning, but Cary expands Murray's observations about the nature of education to indicate that the social expectations faced by men can be just as destructive to mental and spiritual growth as those faced by women.

Cary rarely makes the type of overt references to Christian faith found in works like *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Instead, she creates a humanistic religious ideal based upon the Univeralsalist principals described by the "Winchester Profession" and writers like Ballou. Cary's fiction acknowledges the potential for evil and baseness at all levels of society, even in women and children, but she rejects the harshness and condemnation of early Calvinists and evangelicals. Unlike her sentimental contemporaries, Cary links moral failure to the influence of

American mythologies concerning class and gender that permeate and corrupt society. In a sense, even Cary's villains are victims of societal pressure to conform to unChristian patterns. In order to overcome this darkness of soul, Cary, relies upon her Universalist upbringing. Unlike evangelical writers that emphasized salvation of the individual soul so that that person could spend eternity in heaven, Cary's fiction appears to emphasize the conditions of people in the physical world, and to advocate change here on earth. As such, her fiction is representative of beliefs advocated by famous universalists like Charles Spear, who, according to Bressler, held that universalist principles, "when applied to society, would 'overthrow every existing evil'" (84).   Cary emphasizes self-denial and identification with and service to the community at large, and this emphasis upon the community and family also causes her to reject other liberal spiritualism of the nineteenth century, especially Transcendentalism which stressed the development of the self. Cary's writings highlight that people can only achieve their true potential through rejecting the dominant American ideologies that prescribed acceptable behavior and through laying aside personal ambitions and desires so that individuals may both learn from and serve others.

This dissertation explores the way that Cary questions stereotypes of accepted behavior specifically as they pertain to the identities of men, women, and children and offers a more flexible and inclusive religious

identity rooted in Universalist ideals. In Chapter II, I explore Cary's use

of gothic stories, fairy tale, and sentimental tropes to criticize evangelical

faith, Transcendentalism, and separate spheres based stereotypes of

women's behavior. Cary undermines these stereotypes and replaces

them with a Universalist emphasis on communal service and identity.

In Chapter III, I look at Cary's presentation of masculinity. Borrowing

from scholars such as Anthony Rotundo, Michael Kimmel, and David

Leverenz, I examine how Cary dissects the notions of the Self-Made Man

and his earlier counterparts the Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic

Artisan, and replaces these stereotypes with a Universalist model that

embraces gender fluidity and sacrifice of self interest for the larger

community. In Chapter IV, I continue my examination of how Cary

critiques stereotypes by examining Cary's treatment of children. I reveal

that Cary, unlike many of her sentimental and Romantic

contemporaries, was exposing the dangers of romanticized visions of

middle class children, which physically isolated children from their

families and endangered working class children by increasing the

demand for child labor; thus, I conclude that Cary's Universalism

causes her to depict all children, not just the wealthy ones, as children

of God and worthy of physical and spiritual protection and aid. This

chapter also briefly explores Cary's metaphoric use of children to

represent minorities and tentatively question the treatment of African

Americans and Native Americans. My concluding chapter draws

together the various streams of thought found throughout my

dissertation; further explores the significance of Cary's Universalism as

well as her unique feminism and proto-realism; and calls for further

study in a number of areas specifically related to Cary's writings,

nineteenth century Christian writers, and women's writing.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN CARY'S FICTION

In the nineteen seventies and eighties, critics like Bayme, Tompkins, and Fetterley began to notice a "tradition" of American women's writing. While earlier feminist critics had used the separate spheres paradigm to represent an ideology that trapped and marginalized women, the feminist literary scholars of the seventies and eighties, began to use the separate spheres paradigm both to essentialize women writers as participating in a "feminine tradition" and to justify the study of women's fiction in America as an alternative to what they viewed as a hyper-masculine, individualistic canon (Davidson and Hatcher 9-10). This new feminist paradigm privileged women's writing that seemed to empower women through extending their domestic roles and thus embracing women's perceived spirituality and empathy in order to shape the public sphere. In this view, the writings of American women, were superior to the traditional male canon, since the female writers wrote a literature that included the disenfranchised. While Cary's writing does share some of these qualities, at least on the surface, she was, for the most part, ignored by feminist critics during this period of feminist criticism. Although feminist criticism of the nineties still tended to privilege the separate spheres paradigm, a few

critics such as Joanne Dobson and Judith Fetterely began to revive interest in Cary. Dobson attempted to place Cary within the sentimental tradition, while Fetterley labeled Cary as the originator of regionalist literature, but on the whole, interest in studying Cary still waned. I believe the omission of Cary by critics in this period is the result of Cary's refusal to present a unified picture of women's experience[1]. More recent feminists have rightly criticized separate spheres criticism that celebrates the "cult of True-Womanhood" for its acceptance of such blatant essentialism that appropriates an ideology used to oppress women and even at times presents that ideology as a "culture created by women" (Kerber, qtd in Davidson and Hatcher 10). Cathy N. Davisdon and Jessamyn Hatcher, in their introduction to the book *No More Separate Spheres* portray the early generalizations about women's writing as being both blind to the faults and prejudices of women.

> To much separate spheres criticism carries an unexamined weight of sanctimony, as if powerlessness equals virtue. It does not. Power is not uniformly distributed, and neither is virtue . . . Post-separate spheres criticism asks us to attend to those shifting dynamics of power and privilege. It insists that gender is a significant contributor to human identity, but that it does not encompass, stand in for, obviate, or trump all other factors. Nor does "being a woman"

exculpate women in situations where their words, actions,

or prejudices are harmful to others. (12)

While separate spheres criticism tended to see women's experience as a

monolithic experience trumping all other factors such as race, class, and

ethnicity and to view women as innately virtuous (Davidson and Hatcher

12), Cary's fiction portrays women from a wide range of classes and

experiences, and as Fetterley and Pryse note, "Cary makes little

distinction between men and women in general and does not link

character traits, behaviors, or possibilities for development to gender"

(299). In Cary's writings, women (and mothers) are not necessarily good,

nurturing, or saintly; in fact, often the oppressors in Cary's writing are

women who are despots in their homes. It is no wonder that separate

spheres critics shied away from a female writer who undermined the

perceived "feminine tradition" they were trying to recover and reclaim.

Despite the complexity of Cary's presentation of gender, even the more

recent post-separate spheres critics have largely ignored Cary. Feminist

criticism of the twenty-first century thus far has been far more nuanced

and complicated than earlier criticism. Post-separate spheres criticism

has focused more upon the interaction of gender with other social

factors and "tends to define power and subjectivity as mobile and

uneven in their development and inconsistent in their deployment"

(Davidson and Hatcher 14). Cary's fiction, which concentrates most of

its attention on a rural community and exposes that community as a heterogeneous blend of classes and social status would seem to be a ripe field for post-separate spheres critics, but since the turn of the century only two examinations have been published on Cary. Fetterley and Pryse focus on Cary's "feminist analytic" and her attention to interactions of class, domestic life, and "imperialism" (39), and Elizabeth Schultz uses Marxist criticism to explain the domestic dynamics in Cary's fiction. Cary still remains difficult to classify even by post-separate spheres critics because even though Cary portrays her characters and the domestic sphere as interacting with a number of social factors, her portrayals of those factors, race, childhood, and, most markedly, class seem to defy any single coherent explanation when examined solely through current sociological criticism. In fact, the body of Cary's fiction appears to be one self-contradicting tangle of competing ideas, at least on the surface. Just as Fetterley and Pryse note that Cary portrays women both as victims and victimizers, she also shows similar ambivalence concerning class and other social categories. Some of her sketches like "Zebulon Sands" and "About the Tomkinsons" criticize rural farming classes as stingy, selfish, and self-centered, while in the other Clovernook sketches such as "Two Visits" Cary paints this same class as victimized by society. In regards to separate spheres philosophies, Cary also appears ambivalent. On the surface, her works

often seem to promote feminine gender stereotypes and the ideology of separate spheres, but these works simultaneously subvert the very ideologies they seemingly uphold. While Cary, especially in her sketches, seems to portray women as happiest participating in domestic tasks, she also reveals the darker side of domesticity as a place that can isolate and stifle women. Her sketches seem not only to idealize stereotypical portrayals of females confined to the domestic sphere, but also to show these same women (many times in the same sketch) as being victims because of their domestic situations. However, examining Cary's fiction through the lens of religion, it becomes evident that while Cary does concern herself with categories of social oppression, her dominant concern is a religious concern, motivated by her Universalist upbringing.

Despite the difficulty of classifying or generalizing Cary's treatment of social issues, and especially her portrayal of women and the domestic space, most of the meager criticism on Cary at least touches upon Cary's depiction of womanhood. For instance, Thomas H. Fick links feminine identity to the creation of national identity in Cary's sketch "Mrs. Walden's Confidant." Wendy Ripley focuses on the difficulties Cary faced as a female writer and the effects of these difficulties upon her writing. Jennifer Collins-Friedrichs claims that Cary presents the domestic sphere as a "hostile place" where women and

children face "exploitation, pain, and death" (85), and similarly,

Elizabeth Schultz discusses domestic abuse in Cary's work. Judith

Fetterley, while acknowledging class as the most important issue in

Cary's writing, spends a great deal of time focusing on the narrator

achieving her "voice" and personal power in the face of patriarchal

oppression. Regionalist critics recognize Cary as the "first regionalist"

writer (Fetterley and Pryse) and describe the regionalism as a genre that

fights the repressive stereotypes of feminine identity and creates a genre

of "literature that models a subjectivity attained by standing up for

others, not on them" (Fetterley, "Not in the Least" 878).   According to

Fetterley and Pryse, Cary's fiction uses "the location of region to

foreground a critique of the location of women" (38). However, previous

examinations of Cary's depiction of gender have most often been limited

in scope and fail to present a comprehensive view of Cary's presentation

of womanhood. In general, critics' preoccupation with only a smattering

of Cary's *Clovernook* sketches (most notably "Mrs. Walden's Confidant,"

"Uncle Christopher's," and "Mrs. Wetherbe's Quilting Party") greatly

simplifies Cary's depiction of gender as a critique of stereotypical

feminine identity based on separate spheres ideology. Cary's depiction

of gender is much more complicated and nuanced than these simple

depictions. Seeing Cary as merely objecting to the misogynistic aspects

of separate spheres ideology limits the analysis of her work in two

central ways. First, the focus on separate spheres overly simplifies

Cary's presentation of gender in her work. Second, this focus appears to

have led critics to dismiss (or simply ignore) Cary's writings which do not

appear to openly promote a feminist agenda. Not one single scholar has

chosen to analyze sketches such as "Zebulon Sands" and "The Moods of

Seth Milford" which on the surface seem to vilify the female characters

and uphold stereotypical notions of gender identity. Further, this focus

on Cary's "feminism" has led scholars to dismiss her novels as formulaic

and inferior attempts at pacifying public expectations of "women's

novels" (Fetterley and Pryse 170), but by looking at both Cary's novels

and her sketches, readers can grasp a clearer understanding not only of

Cary's critique of the power structures and oppression in her society,

but also of her ultimate "solution" for society. Cary's Universalist beliefs

cause her to embrace many of the nineteenth century stereotypes of

ideal women's behavior, but this prescription is not merely for women

only. It is a mandate for all members of society to become more

"womanly" through empathetic connection to others, regardless of sex,

class, and social status, as members of God's universal family. Cary

paints oppression as happening at all levels of society, but she offers a

utopian vision for all people to take on the nurturing traits associated

with motherhood and to abandon what she would have undoubtedly

viewed as the self-centered religious teachings of both evangelical faith

and transcendentalism.

Feminine Empathy and Homemaking in "Mrs. Walden's Confidant"

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, previous interpretation of women in Cary's fiction has been largely misguided. One the most obvious examples of this type of myopic criticism is in Fick's analysis of "Mrs Walden's Confidant." This sketch, which was set (like most Cary sketches) in Clovernook and which appeared in Cary's 1859 collection titled *Pictures of Country Life,* clearly depicts Cary's conflicted attitude toward domesticity. Although Fick's analysis presents one of the most thorough explications of a single Cary work, his intense focus on only this causes his interpretation to be misleading concerning Cary's presentation of feminine identity. Fick's analysis centers upon the claim that Cary presents friendly feminine competition as a motivator for women to engage in a "republican motherhood," which, in turn, builds familial and communal ties. The sketch focuses on a woman named Sally Walden who feels both despondent and resentful toward her husband, Timothy. Although her family has a home and ample acreage, the house remains unfinished and the family members are denied every "luxury," including new clothing, food beyond the barest of essentials, and participation in community celebrations. The home and even the yard, which has neither trees nor flowers, are devoid of anything that

could be considered beautiful. However, after her husband is struck by lightning and being inspired by her friend, Mrs. Bates, Sally becomes determined to demonstrate that she is just as successful a housekeeper as a friend. The sketch ends with an elaborate dinner where Sally shows off the improvements she has made in the house, as well as her daughter Matty's recent engagement to the local doctor.

According to Fick, the most significant aspect of the story lies in the competition between Mrs. Bates and Sally Walden. For Fick, Mrs. Bates's visit is provoked mostly by her desire to show herself superior to her neighbor. Fick also views Sally's primary motivation for the change that she undergoes as simply trying to outdo Mrs. Bates. Fick goes on to claim that this competition, along with Sally's realization that her husband cares for her and is not a tyrant, pushes Mrs. Walden into "Republican Motherhood" because she is able to cast off her unjustified notions of victimization and save herself. The central message of the text, according to Fick, is "in line with conservative feminist arguments of the time: women can change their world by changing themselves, and national affluence is inseparable from a happy, well-tended house" (138).

Certainly, the narrative does support such a reading to a certain extent. Mrs. Walden comments multiple times that she can accomplish any task as well Mrs. Bates. The narrator even describes the presence

of Matty's new fiancé, Dr. Meredith, at the dinner as a "final triumph" for

Mrs. Walden. Such language does denote that much of Sally Walden's

efforts are made in order to prove that her domestic skills are as capable

as those of her friend. However, Fick's interpretation of Mrs. Bates'

motivation for her advice to Sally is not supported by the text. Fick

claims that although Mrs. Bates' visit is motivated by sympathy, her

conversation reflects that she feels superior to Sally and wants to assert

that superiority. Fick states that Mrs. Bates interprets the disarray and

deficiencies of the home as "a sign of [Sally's] unnecessary weakness"

(137). Citing the narrator's claim that Mrs. Bates had previously

thought and stated that "Sally Walden was more to blame than her

husband" (298), Fick paints Mrs. Bates as a two-faced gossip and states

that Mrs. Bates's words of private consolation do not reflect her public

behavior. However, Fick pulls the quote out of its original context. The

narrator states,

> Now Mrs. Bates had thought many a time, and said it, too,
> that Sally Walden was more to blame than her husband—
> that she seemed to have no ambition and no pride since her
> marriage, but suffered all things to go at loose ends. But
> now that she sat beside her, and saw her thin cheek and old
> faded dress, and saw, too, the bundle of coarse patched
> shirts she was mending, her heart was softened towards her

and hardened proportionably against her husband. (298-99, sic)

The narrator is clearly indicating that, although Mrs. Bates had previously judged Sally harshly, Sally's misery has emotionally affected her neighbor and brought about a change in her opinion. Mrs. Bates also notices a crucial fact in that Sally's apathy and depression seem to be related to her marriage. Immediately following the statement above, the narrator continues, "Many things about her [Mrs. Bates'] own private affairs she put into the keeping of her friend" (299). The "private affairs" that Mrs. Bates offers are actually points of advice concerning how she manages her household and, particularly, her husband. Although Fick states that Mrs. Bates is "catty" and that her sympathy masks "an edge of competitiveness that thrives on the weakness of her friend" (137), the text itself does not really support reading Mrs. Bates's conversation as the semi-predatory act that Fick paints it to be, but rather her words appear to be motivated by genuine commiseration and concern. Thus, while Mrs. Walden's sudden interest in homemaking may have much to do with competition, the action of her neighbor, the action that begins the entire process, does not appear to be competitive. Fick is correct in his assumption that Cary is idealizing the concept of "Republican Motherhood"; Sally's change in behavior provides new opportunities for her family, especially her daughter, who by the close of the narrative will

soon marry a young doctor. Sally's transformation also reinvigorates the practice of hospitality in her home, a practice that brings members of the community together for a dinner and cements ties between individual families. Despite Fick's claim that these effects are brought about by "friendly competition," Cary is actually pointing to the importance of empathy and service among women as instrumental to the support of individual families and the community at large. The importance of this theme is especially evident when the sketch is read in the context of Cary's other works such as "Two Visits" (*Clovernook, Second Series*). In "The Two Visits," the narrator describes the homes of two women, one of whom is the tenant of the other woman. The narrator clearly admires the poorer of the two women—a widow who works ceaselessly to beautify her home, provide help to her community, and assist her children in successfully navigating the social terrain. In contrast, the narrator finds the richer of the two women, Mrs. Knight, "uninviting" (111), "old fashioned" (109), without "taste" (129) and "comfortless" (129) because (like Sally Walden at the beginning of "Mrs. Walden's Confidant") Mrs. Knight is miserly with both her time and money. However, unlike the account in "Mrs. Walden's Confidant," there is no obvious competition which spurs the two women's homemaking. Cary merely highlights the virtue of the poor woman and critiques what she perceives to be the smallness of the wealthier woman.

Fick does complicate his reading somewhat by pointing out that the narrative subverts the domestic "ideal." Fick notes that the story exposes gender equality since the women of the story in many ways are superior to their mates in business or mental ability. For example, the narrator notes that Matty was a superior student to John Meredith when they were children; however, it is John and not Matty who grows up to become a doctor. Similarly, Mrs. Bates states that her husband gets the credit for her management skills (Fick 142). Despite these women's superior skills and abilities, they are confined to the domestic realm. The "rebirth" of Mrs. Walden into the domestic realm of "republican motherhood" may not truly be a good thing: "the figure of the 'Republican Mother' cheerfully devoting herself" to the needs of her family may be "a displacement of the politically and sexually active woman" (Fick 142), and Mrs. Walden's surrender of her anger and despondency may be stripping her of her power of rebellion and self-definition (Fick 143). Although Fick claims that Cary does not really resolve this conflict, several of Cary's other sketches similarly reveal the dangers of women losing themselves to the patriarchal demands placed upon women in the domestic realm. For example, Fetterley and Pryse note that in "Uncle Christopher's," the identical appearance of the daughters and the wife's failure to act maternally reveal the oppressive power of a patriarchal system that threatens to silence women and strip

them of their individual identities (40-41). The dangers in Cary's writing

are not necessarily in the domestic realm itself but rather in the

pressure for women to lose their individuality that makes them useful to

their families and communities. Sally Walden, at the beginning of "Mrs.

Walden's" confidant, has lost her sense of purpose and identity.

Although in another time or place, she may have become something

other than a housewife, she finds herself confined to the domestic realm.

Cary as a realistic writer recognizes that for most nineteenth century

American women, becoming a housewife is the eventual outcome for

women seeking financial security, even if this outcome is not necessarily

fair or ideal. Indeed, relatively few women would have the opportunities

and determination that Cary and her sister Phoebe had in remaining

single. In her works, Cary illustrates that being a housewife need not be

a limiting factor on a woman's span of influence. By using their

domestic skills and creativity, women can forge for themselves an

essential place in the strengthening of the community. However, women

cannot accomplish this task in the isolation of their homes; they need

the empathetic connection of other women. However, as we shall see,

Cary does not merely promote this type of empathetic connection only

among females. She emphasizes women belonging to larger families

than merely that of their immediate families or even the larger

sisterhood of women, but while she questions women's relegation to the

domestic sphere, she also appropriates some of the language and popular stereotypes of the "cult of True Womanhood," especially those of spirituality and empathy, as models for all citizens, not merely middle class women.

Community in *Hagar, A Story for Today*

Cary's first novel, *Hagar, A Story for Today*, further elaborates the importance of women's connection to the larger community, and it is in this novel where readers can find Cary's fullest exploration of feminine identity. *Hagar* was unpopular during Cary's lifetime and never went into a second printing. Critically, it has not fared well either, in either Cary's lifetime or later. One particularly colorful review by an anonymous author in *The Una* (a magazine usually favorable to women's writing) stated that the novel appeared to have "no aim or purpose but to give utterance to sickly, morbid fancies," and the reviewer sarcastically wondered whether Cary "had been down into one of Dante's hells to get her inspiration" (qtd. in Ripley 87). The quality of writing might be at least partially to blame for the novel's failure since it does have many awkward moments. Important characters, like the daughter Eunice Wurth adopts, are never mentioned or only vaguely referenced after their initial appearances. Other characters, such as Catherine Wurth, appear integral to the development of the plot and themes of the

work, but when they face moments of crises, their outcomes are not revealed and they simply vanish from the rest of the story. At one point, Cary summarizes fifteen years of activity, including the death of a major character, in a single paragraph. Cary herself in the preface to the novel even apologizes for the novel's unevenness, explaining that it is her first effort in the genre. However, these types of short comings and even greater problems were not unheard of in popular sentimental novels of the nineteenth century, just as they are not uncommon today in many popular romance novels. Although more recently the novel has been simply dismissed by feminist and regionalist critics as pandering to social expectations (Fetterley and Pryse 103), *Hagar* displays a complicated understanding of feminine identity.   In the novel, Cary's depiction of female characters depends upon a dialogic approach, which on the surface posits archetypes of femininity that rely on sentimental, gothic, and fairy tale conventions to portray "ideal" feminine virtues; however, she simultaneously subverts these conventions to portray a feminine ideal that resists the dominant stereotype of women as domestic "angels." Cary presents women in a variety of roles, but the key element to Cary's depiction of ideal feminine identity is women's participation in a feminine sisterhood and the larger community, which nurtures women and helps them find their individual power and identity so that they may participate fully as equal citizens in ministering to the

larger family of God.

The three most obvious influences on the plot of *Hagar* are fairy tales, Gothicism, and Sentimentalism. Each of these genres was familiar to 19th century readers, and according to many contemporary feminist critics, each genre was often used to reinforce the doctrine of separate spheres and "ideal" womanhood.   As readily recognizable modes to Cary's readers, these genres provided an ideal vehicle for Cary to frame her story in a way that would not seem overtly threatening to the status quo.   Therefore, Cary uses the conventions of these genres to create a surface level message that appears to affirm traditional models of the feminine ideal.

Gothic Conventions in *Hagar, A Story for Today*

Hagar, A Story for Today, while not strictly a "gothic" text, certainly has gothic influences. The plot recounts the story of a young girl named Elsie and the consequences of her romantic relationship with an older man named Nathan Warburton. Elsie begins her story as a young rural girl from upstate New York, who falls in love with Warburton, who then is an aspiring minister known for his emotionally powerful sermons. Upon promises of love, Elsie surrenders her virginity to the minister, and he promptly departs for New York City. Elsie follows Warburton to the city, and he promises to marry her, but fearing

the opinion of his congregation, he secretly hides her away and when she gives birth to a child, Warburton abandons the sleeping mother and steals the child. After being abandoned by Warburton, Elsie changes her name to Hagar and secures a job as a nanny for a wealthy family the Wurths. Catherine, the young girl for which Elsie has been employed to care, grows into a beautiful young woman and at age seventeen, she meets and eventually marries Warburton, who recognizes Elsie only after she has made a horrific discovery: hidden in a drawer in Warburton's study, Elsie discovers a tiny black coffin holding the skeletal remains of her own daughter. Upon finally recognizing Elsie, he claims he is a changed man and that Elsie is the only love of his life. He begs Elsie to run away with him, but Elsie surprises him by refusing his appeals and calling him a murderer.   Forced to confront the crimes he has committed, Warburton goes insane and Elsie sees him carried away that day by a mental asylum cart.

Elsie then leaves New York and moves to a rural community outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, where she aids the sick and poor, and she wins the love and admiration of Joseph Arnold the local preacher. However, ultimately, Elsie rejects his offer of marriage and determines to live her life on her own. The last six chapters of the novel are written in the form of a letter left by Elsie on the day of her wedding. The letter relates the history of her life and explains why she cannot marry Joseph:

although she loves him, she feels she must deny her desires and remain penitent for the rest of her life. Her life will remain a life of service.

The primary plot of the novel reflects gothic influences.   Most critics of gothic literature trace the genre's emergence to eighteenth century European texts such as *The Castle of Oranto* and *The Monk*. Rising from the Enlightenment, gothic texts represent a rebellion against rationalism in favor of the supernatural and irrational (Stevens 19). Typically, gothic tales have a number of predictable conventions. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offers a comprehensive list of these characteristic conventions including a plot involving a heroine with "trembling sensibility," a lover, and a "tyrannical" older man, a "discontinuous" form involving multiple narrator's and framing devices, references to religious institutions, insanity, "the priesthood and monastic institutions," "sleeplike and deathlike states," doubles, "possibilities of incest," "the unspeakable," and "the poisonous effects of guilt and shame" (9-10). Sedgwick states that these conventions, as well as several others, are so predictable that nearly every gothic novel displays these themes and plot devices (10).

Although gothic critics generally agree that the gothic typically exhibits these predictable elements, the critics often disagree upon the significance and function of the gothic.   According to Maggie Kilgour, even from the birth of the gothic novels readers saw the genre with

remarkably different views. Some critics such as Sir Walter Scott felt

that gothic works roused the primitive emotions of the reader, so that he

or she might safely learn how to control baser human instincts (Kilgour

7). Other early scholars like Samuel Taylor Coleridge saw the gothic as

a genre that threatened readers' imaginations, decision making ability,

and morality, because reading gothic fed "destructive and anti-social

behaviors" (Kilgour 7). Since these initial disagreements, critics have

not come to a consensus regarding the purpose and function of the

gothic. Among political and social activists, these two initial views of the

gothic still survive, but the debate in academia has become more

esoteric.   Cultural and historical critics trace the gothic as emerging

from the period of the Enlightenment as a rebellion against the cultural

insistence upon rationalism (Stevens 19). Marilyn Gaull claims that as a

rebellion against the rational, gothic explores the supernatural and

spiritual in a culture that had lost much of its faith "in the theological

interpretation of nature before there was a scientific one to replace it

(qtd. in Stevens 5). Currently, some of the most popular interpretations

of the gothic employ a psychological model which posits that "superficial

layers of convention and prohibition, called 'the rational,' conceal and

repress a deep central well of primal material, 'the irrational,' which is

the locus of the individual self, which could or should pass to the

outside" (Sedgewick 11). In other words, psychological criticism of the

gothic views the genre as representing the struggle between the conscious and the unconscious mind as the hero or heroine works through essential struggles in development. One particularly strong conflict often commented upon by some gothic scholars is the female Oedipus conflict: the heroine surrenders her masochistic desire for her father when the hero of the story rescues the heroine so that she can participate as a fully mature sexual adult (Chapman 184-85). For other critics, the female gothic reinforces the message that women belong in the domestic sphere:

> The gothic appears to suggest that the inevitable can only be pleasurably, and fictitiously, deferred for a time, as the domestic sphere is the only appropriate end of a woman's adventures . . . The gothic thus both represents in the story of its heroine and offers to its readers a momentary subversion of order that is followed by the restoration of a norm, which, after the experience of terror, now seems immensely desirable. (Kilgour 8)

For these critics, the gothic novel is nothing more than a morality tale that makes "women content with their lot" (Kilgour 8). Some feminists do note, however, that the ending of the story is "unsatisfactory" and flat forcing the reader to pay more attention to the "aesthetic pleasures of the middle" (Kilgour 8). David Punter defends the gothic as "not an

escape from the real but a deconstruction and dismemberment of it"
(97). In other words, the gothic does not ratify domesticity as an ideal,
but rather it exposes the dark underbelly of domestic life, defamiliarizing
domestic reality by "cloaking familiar images of domesticity in gothic
forms" and thereby enabling the reader to "see that the home is a
prison" (Kilgour 9).

Many of these critical approaches mentioned above are
particularly helpful in examining the significance of *Hagar*. The primary
conflict between Elsie, Warburton, and Joseph, reflects the type of love
triangle common in the female gothic form of writers like Anne Radcliff.
Elsie is seduced and then victimized by an older man who has known
her since she was a child. Later, she falls in love with the hero of the
text, who is her own age and virtuous, but the story of Elsie is not the
story of a Radcliff heroine. Her story does not end in a happy marriage
but instead the rejection of a "happy ending." Having been abandoned
first by her parents and then having been betrayed by her lover, Elsie's
experience in the domestic realm has shown it to be one of loneliness
and horror, and in the end, it is a realm she rejects in favor of a nomadic
lifestyle where she is tied to a husband who rules her behavior.

*Hagar'*s Gothicism also reflects a strong distrust of traditional
religious authority. While early gothic texts, with their villainous monks
and religious figures, tend to criticize the Catholic church, Cary is

critiquing the Protestant evangelicals. Such criticism of evangelical ministers would have been quite in keeping with Universalist critiques of the evangelists and the evangelical movement. Universalist ministers such as Menzies Rayner, Russell Streeter, and Thomas Whittemore held that evangelists practiced "any number of doctrinal perversions" because turned Salvation "into a straightforward mercenary transaction, a limited-time offer by a busy God available through revivalist-agents, who presumably worked on commission for every soul delivered" (Bressler 60). When Warburton first meets Elsie, he is a minister known throughout the region for his powerful sermons which stir people to repentance. During the nineteenth century the evangelical movement in America was growing particularly strong, as revivalists preached fiery sermons about individual sin, the fires of hell, and "angry God" (Carroll 34). Cary, having been raised in the liberal Universalist Church, would have questioned the harsh messages of preachers like Warburton, and in her novel, she presents the strict religious authority embodied in Warburton as the subject of horror. She places on Warburton, and by extension all strict evangelicals, what many would consider the ultimate sin. He is not a mere murderer; he is a murderer of his own child. Further, after killing his child, he becomes an idolater by keeping the infant's tiny corpse with him and viewing it daily in a pagan-like ritual. The central or most important effect of Cary's Gothicism is a rejection of

the conservative evangelical faith embodied in Warburton. However, Cary does not ridicule all organized religion. By the close of the novel, Elsie has resumed regular church attendance, and she falls in love with another minister. Unlike Warburton, Joseph is a more liberal-minded minister. He is not known for fiery sermons. Instead he lives a life of service and human connection, a lifestyle to which Cary would have been particularly receptive. Despite her rejection of marriage with Joseph, Elsie's rejection of Warburton and love for Joseph, signals both spiritual healing in Elsie and marks her official reentrance into the Christian community at large.

Wicked Stepmothers, Virtuous Heroines, and Absent Fathers

In addition to gothic influences, the novel also relies on fairy tale archetypes to present its message. During the nineteenth century fairy tales enjoyed increasing influence and popularity in America and throughout Europe. With roots in European, particularly German, folklore, the first literary fairy tales originated in the seventeenth century when writers such as Charles Perrault embellished tales they had learned from domestic servants and other peasants (Darnton 282). In the nineteenth century, the Grimms published several different collections of their embellishments on German folk tales. These volumes made the Grimms a household name in both America and across

Europe by the middle of the century (Zipes xxviii), and with the

popularity of the Grimms tales, writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Hans

Christian Anderson, and even Edgar Allan Poe began to experiment

creating original fairy tales of their own. However, the tales of Grimms

remained the most popular and influential fairy tales during the

nineteenth century, with some of the most popular stories being "Snow

White," "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Hansel and Gretel," and

most of these tales display a number of stock figures or archetypes. The

most frequent of these archetypes is the archetype of the bad mother or

"maternal evil." This figure is sometimes embodied in adopted mothers

(like the witch in "Rapunzel") or mother-in-laws (like the prince's

cannibalistic mother in "The Mother-In-Law"), but the most common

embodiment of the bad mother is the evil stepmother. Prominent

folklorist Maria Tartar states, "Stepmothers stand as an abiding source

of evil in countless fairy tales . . . Folklorists would be hard pressed to

name a single good stepmother, for in fairy tales the very title "step-

mother' pins the badge of iniquity on a figure" (141).   In addition to the

presence of evil step-mothers, Grimms' tales frequently feature accounts

of a virtuous heroine, whose "sensitivity and pity toward others" is one

of her "greatest virtues" and the attribute that gain her magical salvation

(Jones 15), but despite the heroine's virtue she is tortured by her step-

mother (Tartar 141). The most recognizable of these tales of conflict

between heroine and step-mother are "Cinderella" and "Snow White" (which Tartar claims is really just a variant of the traditional "Cinderella" story).

The second major plot of the novel, which details the relationship between Catherine Wurth and her stepmother, Eunice, reenacts a similar conflict between virtuous daughter and evil stepmother. Catherine's mother, who is also named Catherine, dies shortly after her daughter's birth. After his wife's death, Catherine's father Frederick, leaving his newborn in the care of his female servants, departs almost immediately on business in Europe and does not see his child until she is almost a year old. Frederick continues this pattern of neglect spending nearly all of his time on business trips or visits to his friend Joseph Arnold's home in Ohio. During one of his visits, Frederick marries Eunice, Joseph's sister, and brings her to his home in New York. Eunice immediately takes over the daily tasks of running the house, but she never truly accepts her role as a mother figure toward her stepdaughter, who is only a toddler when Eunice arrives. Although Catherine loves Eunice and refers to her as "Mama," Eunice emotionally and physically neglects the child and adopts a little girl whom she showers with gifts and affection. As Eunice ages, she becomes increasingly involved with the women's movement and dies alone overseas, but the novel does not reveal what happens to Catherine after

her new husband's insanity is exposed. Neither does the novel reveal

what happens to Catherine's adopted sister during her adulthood.

In *Hagar,* Cary utilizes the same feminine archetypes which

appear in "Cinderella" and "Snow White": the dead virtuous mother, the

virginal, near-perfect daughter, and the monstrous step-mother. The

servants repeatedly note Catherine's beauty and gentleness as she grows

from girlhood to womanhood. Catherine's meekness is also evident in

her refusal to speak harshly of her step-mother despite the emotional

abuse Catherine suffers. On the other hand, Eunice, systematically

attempts to strip away her step-daughter's happiness. Jealous of

Frederick's love and admiration for his deceased wife and the

resemblance of his beautiful child to her mother, Eunice isolates

Catherine by firing Mrs. Crum, the person in this world who loves the

child most. Eunice's choice of Elsie as the new nanny also reveals the

depths of Eunice's jealousy toward the child, since Elsie is a girl who, by

all rights, is scarcely qualified to care for a child:

> The lady surveyed her for a moment, in silence, and
>
> pointing to a seat in a distant part of the room, proceeded
>
> with her examination.
>
> > "Did you know Mrs. Catharine Wurth?"
> >
> > "No, madam," replied the girl, . . .

"Are you fond of children?" was the next question,
asked in a sharp and dissatisfied tone which brought the
large sad looking eyes of the abstracted young woman into
contact with her own cold gray ones.

"Yes—no—I was never much used to children;" . . .

"If you are too fond, you will spoil the child; that is
all."

"That will not be likely; I do not talk much;" . . .

"And of course you have no mind."

"Not much," she said, writing on the box with her
finger.

"Good health—don't talk—not fond of children: I think
of nothing more I care to ask;" and the mistress rang the
housekeeper's bell. (59-60)

Eunice's sole concern in this interview appears to be finding someone
who is emotionally distant and incapable of loving her step-daughter.
Eunice herself ignores little Catharine and favors her adopted daughter.
While Catherine longs for her "mama" to kiss and hold her like she does
her sister, Eunice ignores and neglects the child entirely, leaving her
poorly attired and starved for attention, while the only mother she has
ever known showers all her attention and love on her adopted sibling.
This neglect is even more malevolent in that, at social gatherings,

Eunice pretends to be the ideal mother: "To be sure, the child is selfish and ill-tempered . . . but I always do by her just as if she were my own" (165).   Eunice not only feigns love and affection but moreover she maligns the child's character, further isolating Catherine from social interaction.

Also mimicking the "Snow White" formula is the near absence of the father figure's physical presence in the family. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim that the presence of the speaking mirror in "Snow White" is actually the voice of the King who is mentioned only once in the Grimms' version of the story:

> His, surely, is the voice of the looking glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's – and every woman's – self-evaluation. He is who decides, first, that his consort is 'the fairest of all,' and then, as she becomes maddened, rebellious, witchlike, that she must be replaced by his angelically innocent and dutiful daughter. (38)

Even in his absence, the patriarchal voice of the father rules the family. Similarly, Frederick Wurth of *Hagar* hardly appears in the novel because he is too busy with his public affairs and business, but Eunice's intense jealousy of her step-daughter, like the jealousy of the Queen in "Snow White," is fueled and driven by the patriarchal expectations and desires of her husband.

On the surface, the resemblance of the Wurth family to the traditional fairy tale formula seems to give voice to a decidedly "anti-feminist" view. Eunice, who seems to be a self governed, intelligent woman, is clearly portrayed as a heartless tormentor, one of Gilbert and Gubar's "monster-women" opposed to the "angel-woman" represented by both the young Catherine and her dead mother. As expected of a "wicked stepmother," Eunice also suffers a lonely fate and early death:

> Her mind had been cultivated until men were seen by her in all their natural grossness and deformity, and she made terrible resolves against the continuance of their tyrannous monopolies, in the council, and the field, and all varieties of out door affairs . . . she was perfectly convinced that the "philosopher of Jerusalem" was far behind the editor of the Transcendent Transcendentalist, and that the Twelve whom he commissioned to teach his doctrine were less advanced than the standing committee of the Society of Unappreciated Women, of which she herself was a vice president. Observing that the hens yielded undue deference to the roosters, every one of whom seemed to think himself really entitled to be a cock of the walk, she said it was no wonder, with the examples they had before them of men's hateful assumptions, and she organized a powerful society for the

> assertion, vindication and preservation of Biddies' Rights . .
>
> . she went abroad, to confer with the great lights of
>
> Progression in other countries, and died—in wet blankets.
>
> (180-181)

At this moment in the text, Cary is satirizing the budding women's movement in the United States and she ridicules what Eunice has become. Blinded to her own tyrannical nature, Eunice deludes herself and sees herself, as well as womankind in general (at least those of her own social class), as a victim. However, her involvement in this political movement is a far cry from the genuine connection she could have found with the women in her own household had she laid aside her self-centeredness. She leaves her community to die sick and alone in a foreign country. In contrast, both Catherines are beloved by all those around them. Further, neither woman voices objection to her domestic situation. The elder Catherine dies for her domestic ideal, while the younger Catherine meekly suffers a loveless marriage which ends with her much older husband being committed to an insane asylum.

While Cary uses the fairy tale form to bolster a separate spheres ideology on the surface level of her novel, she subverts this traditional message in several ways. Most obviously Catherine, unlike Snow White and Cinderella, suffers loss at the end of her story. The heart of fairy tale plot lines is the triumph of sensibility and the punishment of cruelty, and

both of these facets allow the heroine to emerge from her lowly place and ascend to her "rightful place on the throne"(Jones 15). In contrast, Catherine experiences no earthly reward for her righteousness. Her husband, who comes to her in the guise of a Prince Charming, is actually a sociopathic Bluebeard-type character—a murderer, who has secretly killed his own child and has no real affection for Catherine.

In addition, Eunice is much more complex than the flat archetype of the evil step-mother.   While Cary clearly ridicules what Eunice has become, she also presents Eunice's monstrosity as having resulted from her husband's failure to love.   When Cary first introduces Eunice, she is a far cry from the monster she later becomes. Granted she does have a lethal combination of self-imposed ignorance and arrogance, claiming

> Nature is my only guide—my only book. I have put aside all reading for the last year, so imbued is everything with false notions; and I may safely say I have grown more, mentally, in that time than during any of the previous five years of my life. Self-reliance, self-education, are what we need (117).

Clearly satirizing Emerson's claims in "Self-Reliance," Cary presents Eunice as valuing the mind and self over emotions and human connections. Eunice is conceited, distant, and cold in her personality, but she still has the potential for good. When her character first appears, her brother finds her with a lap full of unbleached cotton shirts

she is making for Native American children. At this point in the novel,

Eunice's short-comings might be viewed as just a phase of youth from

which she might emerge a mature woman.

Eunice does not become the monster-woman until she marries

Frederick Wurth, a man who selects wives "on the principle by which

[he] would procure a new coat or hat" (Cary, *Hagar* 141). He seldom

interacts with his wife and children, choosing instead to regularly travel

away from home on business trips. Eunice's jealousy of the child

Catherine clearly reflects her desire to be loved. She believes that

because the child resembles and is named after her mother, Frederick

loves the child. In fact, shortly after his first wife's death and child's

birth, he travels to Europe and hardly sees the young girl for over a year.

He even neglects to name the daughter, leaving the task with his

domestic staff. Frederick is incapable of true affection and love for the

women in his family. In contrast, Eunice clearly is capable of love since

she loves and dotes on her adopted daughter (who incidentally is never

named in the novel), and her jealousy of both Catherines indicates her

desire to be loved. Eunice's lonely, premature death serves a double

function. On the surface, it is the direct result of her misguided actions,

but on a deeper level it reflects the emotional abandonment she has

experienced from her husband – an emotional abandonment that has

both hardened her heart and led her to an empty philosophical system,

which she uses to fill her emotional void. Eunice, failing to receive the love of her husband, turns inward, espousing transcendentalist philosophy that privileges the self and tells its followers such axioms as "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (Emerson, "Self Reliance"). She forsakes all true empathetic attachment to those around her and chooses instead to vent her pain through victimizing others and participating in political rallies. However, even as monstrous as Eunice lives her life, she is actually portrayed more sympathetically than Cary's depiction of evangelical society embodied in Warburton, indicating that while she objected to Emersonian philosophy and much of the women's rights movement, she found both far less dangerous than the evangelical movement.

Ultimately, Cary undermines the separate spheres ideology of the fairy tale formula by making the story of the Wurth family a minor plot in the novel. The story of the Wurths is not the central focus of the novel. In fact, the plot is only a minor subplot within the story and is completed by chapter ten of the novel. This embedding of the traditional fairy tale plot serves to draw the reader's attention further away from the traditional separate spheres ideologies, which the archetypes seem to enforce, and instead focuses the reader's attention to the less traditional character of Elsie, who becomes empowered through her relationships

with her community of women and later through her service to the community at large.

Hagar as a Sentimental Novel

This emphasis on domesticity and female community firmly roots the novel in the sentimental tradition. Jane Tompkins describes sentimental fiction as being "written by, for, and about women" (124-25). This genre is often marked by what most modern readers would consider excessive emotions and moralizing, and since sentimental fiction is written by women writing about women, the subject matter is often rooted in the domestic sphere. In the nineteenth-century this genre, encompassing novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was the most popular and politically influential genre of fiction in the United States. *Hagar* shares most of the characteristics of sentimental fiction, but while sentimental novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Susan Warner's *The Wide Wide World* enjoyed popularity and were critically praised by contemporary reviews for their insight into human nature, "religious truth," and universal sentiment (Tompkins 17), *Hagar* was harshly reviewed and unpopular. Although the unevenness of the text might be to blame for *Hagar*'s lack of success, I believe that the novel's departures from typical sentimental formulas accounts for much of its financial and critical failure.

Hagar bears some remarkable similarities to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which Tompkins describes as "the summa theologica of nineteenth-century America's religion of domesticity," since the novel relates "the story of salvation through motherly love" (125). *Hagar* reflects a similar message. Cary's novel creates a small community of women that works, under the leadership of Mrs. Goodell, to strengthen its members and help them grow emotionally and spiritually. Upon the death of her mistress the first Mrs. Wurth, Mrs. Goodell takes over the responsibilities of running the house and responds to the other servants in a motherly fashion. Cary writes,

> But the rod she swayed was not of iron, and though they laughed and took occasions much oftener than necessary to say "Mrs. Goodell," they could not choose but love her, for her severest reproof was never more than a sweet and subdued expression of surprise. (83)

Mrs. Goodell in many respects mirrors Stowe's depiction of Rachel Halliday in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Like Rachel, Mrs. Goodell runs the household in the fashion of an idealized mother, whose subordinates obey her out of mutual love and respect. This love and respect particularly extends to the other three female characters under her supervision: Miss Crum, Catherine, and, later, Elsie. Immediately after Mrs. Catherine Wurth's funeral, Mrs. Goodell sorts the clothing of her

late mistress in order to ensure that the newborn infant's rights to her mother's silverware and special items of clothing might be protected. However, Mrs. Goodell's motherly nurturance is not a feat she accomplishes on her own. Miss Crum helps Mrs. Goodell from becoming too conceited by her power. Despite the housekeeper's seniority and superior position in the house, Miss Crum refuses to refer to Mrs. Goodell by her official title after the demise of the first Mrs. Wurth elevates the housekeeper's station. Instead, Miss Crum interacts with Mrs. Goodell as a friend and confidant, and together, along with Elsie's later aid, they help the younger Catherine to emerge as an almost angelic woman despite her father's neglect and her step-mother's emotional abuse. As exchange for Miss Crum's companionship and aid, Mrs. Goodell uses her experience as a mother and domestic servant to mentor Miss Crum in regard to etiquette and how to properly care for her infant charge. Although Miss Crum often oversteps her bounds, she does grow to become a responsible and protective caretaker for the young girl. Not only does Miss Crum learn the proper physical measures to take in caring for Catherine, but she also helps the child emotionally. Miss Crum treasures Catherine, showering her with music, physical affection, and attention, and she attempts to insulate the girl from her step-mother's scorn.

This feminine community becomes particularly important to
Elsie's development. Elsie arrives at the Wurth house a cold, unfeeling
woman, injured both by her upbringing and her former lover. As a child
in her parents' home, Elsie has experienced loneliness and solitude.
She describes these experiences in the letter, which she leaves for
Joseph Arnold at the novel's close:

> It is many years ago that I was a little innocent child, gentle
> and loving; but my parents were poor, and the toils of their
> hard and rough journey made them negligent of me. I do not
> remember of ever being kissed in childhood, even by my
> mother. I do not think I ever was. I remember seeing her
> always at work, and the patient and weary look that she
> wore. My father, I felt always, was not a good man. He often
> spoke harshly to my mother, when at home, but he was not
> much there, and I know that I was gladdest when he was
> gone . . . It was a sad pastime, my solitary playing, for I, had
> no sisters, and never but one brother, and he many years
> younger than I. (227-28)

Elsie grows up never experiencing the affection and companionship of a
family. At one point in her youth, her parents even give her to her aunt
and uncle, an act that leaves Elsie vulnerable to the attentions of
Warburton. Elsie's first experience with romantic love is even more

destructive. Upon surrendering herself physically and emotionally, she is treated as a prostitute and left abandoned and alone, robbed even of her own infant child, but Mrs. Goodell helps Elsie to find love within the little community of women in her charge. Upon first meeting Elsie, she shows the new nurse compassion. After hearing Elsie state that she is willing to work for whatever her employers are willing to pay, Mrs. Goodell expresses concern and agrees to negotiate a fair wage for Elsie. In addition, Mrs. Goodell's happiness and contentment serves as an inspiration to the melancholy nanny who "should like to study" the older woman's secret, namely the ability to be happy. Mrs. Goodell also helps Elsie recognize little Catherine's love for her, telling her that the little girl loved Elsie better than any other person in the world and that should bring joy to her life (168-69). In truth, according to Elsie, Catherine's love, as well as Mrs. Goodell's affectionate instruction, help open Elsie's heart and strengthen her character (283). She not only learns to love and serve others, but she also develops a sense of self worth and self-reliance. Her self-worth arises from her empathetic connection to those women in her community, unlike the cold, self-centered philosophies espoused by Eunice. Elsie's recognition that she is loved and capable of love gives her the strength to reject Warburton's final temptation, a rejection that leads her to overcome him.

The didactic nature of *Hagar* is another characteristic the novel shares with other sentimental texts. Such didacticism is a common hallmark of sentimental fiction and is one of the characteristics of the genre which has generated much resistance in modern critics and readers who object to the apparent absolutism of the texts. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has no shortage of didacticism in its presentation of the evils of slavery, the role of motherhood, and the true nature of Christian faith. Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple,* which is another famous American sentimental novel, demonstrates the downfall of an immoral woman. Nearly every nineteenth century sentimental novel has very specific moral and spiritual messages targeted especially toward women, and *Hagar* is no exception. To a nineteenth century audience, Elsie would be above all else a fallen woman. Throughout the novel, she seems to be tortured by guilt over her actions, and the novel's ending seems to serve as a warning to young women that they should remain chaste daughters under the protection of their parents until suitable husbands come and claim them. This message is further reinforced by Elsie's refusal to marry at the end of the novel—a refusal that could easily be viewed as a failure or self-imposed punishment.

Despite this apparent message, the novel presents a more nuanced reality than it first seems to indicate. Elsie's departure from her family's protection is unavoidable because of her parents' neglect –

neglect that stems from both her father's absence from the home and the poverty of the family which drives the mother from the home as well. Part of what Cary may be revealing in the novel is the impossibility of the total protective ability both of paternal authority and the domestic sphere for young women. Further, Elsie is originally led astray by a minister who promises love, affection, and respect. Warburton is a highly esteemed minister throughout the country with a spotless reputation. According to nineteenth century conventions, his should be a voice to be trusted, but instead of a voice from God, this minister proves to be a demonic figure. While the novel adopts a religious message of service and self sacrifice, it also exposes a distrust of traditional, male-dominated religion in America, especially evangelicalism, which, according to Randall Balmer and Laura F. Winner, was quickly growing in frontier areas of America like Cary's childhood home of Ohio (50). Elsie's initial distrust of Joseph Arnold reflects this general criticism in traditional religion. When Joseph Arnold shows romantic interest in Elsie and promises a new life free of past guilt, he is also subject to scrutiny in Elsie's eyes. The first meeting between Elsie and Joseph bears out Elsie's suspicion:

> [Joseph]: Do I speak as if moved by a sudden impulse? No, I
> know what I say, and what I seek, and what I would have,
> and shall have, in spite of yourself. I do not know you, you

say. Have you not been aware of my near presence, as, night after night, you have sung in the moonlight songs which seemed only meant for me? Did you not feel that I was praying for you, as you wept by the grave of—"

[Elsie]: "Great God! and have you then been a spy on my actions and my words?" she exclaimed, passionately. "And for what are you come now? to reproach and mock me? Oh! if you ever knew the need of pity, spare me." (211)

Joseph has confessed that he is moved by Elsie's selfless service to members of the community. He has been so drawn to her that he has watched her from a distance every night. Elsie, now a mature woman, does not instantly believe Joseph's confession. Instead, she forces him to slowly earn her trust. She even grows to love Joseph, but ultimately she refuses the domestic "salvation" that he offers her through respectable marriage. Having been transformed by her empathetic connection to others and her service to community, Elsie decides that the fulfillment of her purpose as a woman and human being comes from service rather than romantic attachment. Ultimately, she responds to her own religious belief in penance and service and rejects the "happiness" offered by Joseph as an empty promise. Her only salvation and sense of fulfillment will arise through her work on behalf of "those who suffer" (210).

This theme of feminine service is further enhanced by Joseph's transformation. While Joseph is not a reprobate at the opening of the novel, he cares mainly about entertaining himself and spends his life travelling from adventure to adventure; in contrast, by the novel's close, Joseph has become a minister who cares for the needs of his community:

> He has learned to love mankind, and in loving, he has learned to pray and to hope; and he has learned that we are of little account without charity. More than forty years he has lived in the world, and more than thirty of them were wasted in vain and idle schemes of the reformation of society—himself needing most to be reformed—and in cogitating wonders he would do, with a fair chance, and if so many fools were not in his way. In the resolution at last came the opportunity, and he discovered that no greater obstacle than himself ever impeded his advancement in usefulness and reputation. (184-85)

The narrator reveals that Joseph, like Eunice, had embraced self-centered philosophies. Here Cary is parodying Emerson's transcendentalist philosophy, exposing it as "vain" and "idle," and revealing those who espouse it to be misguided in their attempts to reform society. By looking inward to his own desires, Joseph, like his

sister Eunice, is blinded to his own shortcomings. Only by looking outward to the needs of his community, does he find true self-realization. His transformation mirrors that of Elsie; it is a transformation that looks not only inward but also outward to the needs of others.

Also, Joseph's transformation, like Elsie's, is a transformation that would have been impossible without the feminine community. This transformation is largely due to what he learns from the life of the first Mrs. Wurth and from his niece Nanny. Joseph's transformation begins when he attends the funeral of the elder Catherine Wurth. At the funeral, Joseph hears a moving eulogy describing Catherine's virtuous life of service. Joseph later reveals in the novel that this account of Catherine's service so impressed him that he began to evaluate his own life. His final evolution culminates because of his relationship with his niece Nanny. She performs nearly all the work on the family farm while the rest of the family is content to let Nanny labor (123). Nanny finds fulfillment in her role within her community and in her service to others:

> Gentle and loving and dutiful, considerate for others,
> forgetful of self, no hardship was too wearying and no
> sacrifice too great, by which she could do good to any one.
> In the garden, by the flower-beds, feeding the chickens,
> telling stories for the children, in the kitchen, or in the field

with her father, she was busy, and cheerful and contented.

(139)

Nanny is not a self-proclaimed martyr. She serves because she finds

joy in helping and loving others. Her role within the community of her

family even expands beyond the expected domestic roles of tending to

the house and the children; she works side-by-side with her father in

the fields. Nanny also provides wisdom and counsel to her family

members, including her parents and her Uncle Joseph. When Nanny

becomes ill with tuberculosis, she still attempts to meet the needs of

others as she cheerfully and patiently submits to every home remedy

and suggestion offered by doctors and family members despite the fact

that these "cures" often seem more intolerable than the illness (144).

Nanny does die, but her death serves a greater redemptive purpose in

the novel. Many twentieth century critics considered the death of a

child "the epitome of Victorian Sentimentalism," and this evaluation was

often made in disdain since many scholars see the sentimental event as

a needless moment of emotionalism designed to manipulate readers

(Tompkins 126). However, Tompkins notes that the deaths of children

in sentimental literature are essential to the sacrificial themes of

sentimental literature. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Little Eva's death signals

access to power (Tompkins 127). Tompkins writes that Eva functions as

a Christ-like sacrifice, "in which the pure and powerless die to save the

powerful and corrupt" (128). Eva dies to show Topsy love and to help Miss Ophelia to love so that both may experience spiritual conversion (131). Similarly, in *Hagar*, Nanny's death is the final catalyst for Joseph's transformation. Because of Nanny's example, Joseph concludes that true goodness and faith must be accompanied by service (123-24). After Nanny's death, Joseph decides to follow her example and devote himself to ministry where he serves with empty pockets and a "threadbare coat" (178).

Despite its similarities to other sentimental texts, the novel departs from traditional depictions of "the cult of True Womanhood" presented by writers like Stowe. Cary does not uniformly present women as necessarily more spiritual or saintly than the men around them. In her depiction of her characters, she recognizes Davidson and Hatcher's claim that "being excluded from full citizenship by the U.S. constitution does not, in and of itself, make one good" (12). As I discussed earlier, Cary's depiction of Eunice portrays her as far from the ideal mother or employer. Not only does she treat Catherine badly, but she also treats her domestic staff poorly. Laurie Ousley describes the reality created by the economic disparity between middle-class wives like Eunice and her working class staff: "That difference in status was created by the introduction of the wage relationship into the home followed by the servant's growing dependence on her wages, allowing the

mistress a good deal of power, a power she often exploited" (133), and Cary certainly does reveal Eunice exploiting her power both over her step-daughter and her domestic staff, one of whom she fires simply on a whim. Even the "good" women, in the novel are far from perfect. Miss Crum although she shows dogged loyalty to those she loves, is far from perfect. Cary demonstrates that sin is not restricted only to the upper classes. Mrs. Crum is a terrible gossip. She also repeatedly tortures Eunice by repeatedly discussing the first Mrs. Wurth in ways that make Eunice feel inferior and unloved and that fuel her jealousy toward her step-daughter. Further, although Miss Crum loves Catherine, some of her inclinations about the care of the child reflect both ignorance and selfishness. At one point in the novel, Mrs. Goodell pulls a bottle of laudanum from Miss Crum's hands just before she was going to give a spoonful to the infant, yet despite all Miss Crum's faults, her heart reflects a softness in that she submits to the instruction and aid of Mrs. Goodell in order to become a better person.

Mrs. Goodell, one of the most maternalistic characters of the novel, also struggles with weakness. Mrs. Goodell, like Eunice, can be prideful and domineering. When she takes over the leadership of the domestic staff, she tries to force them all to stop referring to her by her first name and instead address her by her formal title, Mrs. Goodell. In addition, she sometimes seems patronizing and condescending to Miss

Crum and the other servants, but Miss Crum's friendship constantly keeps Mrs. Goodell's pride in check.

By the close of the novel, Elsie is about the closest female character to "perfect" in the novel, but despite her service to her community, she is still shy and withdrawn from others. Because of her past experience, she is also distrustful of others, as is evident in her first meeting with Joseph Arnold.

In fact, the novel presents only three characters who reflect the traditional feminine ideal. The first of these is Nanny who dies as a small child, worn out from sickness and labor. The second is the first Mrs. Wurth, who dies in childbirth fulfilling her wifely obligations, and the third is Catherine, who marries a murderer and halfway through the novel disappears from the narrative entirely. The readers never learn what becomes of her. The death and absence of "ideal" women seems to indicate that the ideal itself is just that, an ideal, impossible for any woman to fulfill. Instead, the women of the novel are left to navigate their lives according to other principles.

Conclusions

In her sketches as well as her novel *Hagar,* Cary puts forward a theme quite common among women writers in the nineteenth century. She calls for women to embody lives of service and empathetic connections to others in order to find personal fulfillment and transform their communities for the better. This theme in itself reflects a separate spheres ideology that represents the dutiful and virtuous housewife working devotedly and patiently in the domestic sphere as the keeper of moral virtue (Gilbert and Gubar 22-23). While it is true that Cary does advocate such behavior of women who, like Mrs. Walden, have already chosen the route of marriage, Cary also complicates her vision of feminine community and empathy. While most sentimental writers point to the home as a place of power and influence for women, one of Cary's most significant complications is that she demonstrates the domestic sphere as a place of isolation and potential danger for women and children. Even married women must venture outside of their homes in order to form meaningful connections within the community.

In addition, Cary offers another alternative to marriage in her presentation of Elsie. When Elsie is confronted with the opportunity to become a housewife, she refuses and instead chooses a life of wandering service. Free from the daily demands of the domestic sphere, Elsie is free to wander and free to truly serve her community, and embody

Cary's religious ideal of salvation through service and self-sacrifice. Although Cary's religious ideal may appear to have much in common with the evangelical doctrines espoused in other sentimental texts, her vision is unique. Like other sentimental texts Cary holds empathy and communal connection as the central trait necessary for human redemption, but unlike other sentimental texts, Cary's work seems more rooted in the earthly transformation of the human soul rather than eternal salvation of the soul after death. Cary's texts make very few traditional references to the supernatural religious experience or the afterlife. Instead, the transformation and salvation that seems most to matter to Cary is the individual person finding meaning and personal worth within the context of community. Further, this interaction between the self and community stands in stark contrast to transcendental thought which challenges readers to stand alone in their communities. While Emerson states "to be great is to be misunderstood" and Thoreau encourages people to "step" to the beat of a "different drummer," Cary, as a true believer in the Universalist concept of the "family of God" challenges her readers, particularly women, to find meaning in their service and emotional connection with those around them.

CHAPTER III

SPIRITUAL MANHOOD IN CLOVERNOOK AND *THE BISHOP'S SON*

Although Cary's depiction of women has been one of the most explored areas of her work, very little attention has been directed toward her presentation of manhood. In fact, the only commentary concerning Cary's exploration of this topic consists of brief moments in Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse's discussion of "Uncle Christopher's" and "My Grandfather," and these observations are made within a feminist framework that concentrates more upon the effects of patriarchy on the female narrator in each story. Cary criticism has yet to gain an in depth discussion of Cary's presentation of manliness; nonetheless, the study of manliness in Cary's works is a rich ground for study in that her characterization of males reveals a strikingly modern sense of gender, which in some cases even anticipates modern constructivist theories.

Borrowing from feminist scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir – who famously quipped "one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" (232)– several historians of masculinity and manhood have noted that "masculinity, like femininity, is a fictional construction" and that "masculinity involves diverse and continually changing sexualities" (Murphy 1). This illusionary nature of "true" manliness is especially evident in the nineteenth century, when the definition of manhood was

contested and in transition.   Growing up in post-Revolutionary America, Cary witnessed the evolution of the many definitions of "ideal manhood" proffered by different segments of the American population, and in her works she exposes the falsity of these definitions and their punitive nature on men and the social structures they inhabit.

Following the American Revolution, both American society and its writers were in the process of redefining what being a man meant in the newly established country, and this effort involved navigating the lingering influence of Puritan and European standards of manliness as well as the new emphasis on independent action and capitalistic pursuit resulting from the post-revolutionary climate of the country. This was a time of crisis for defining American manhood, and Cary like other writers of her time was trying to navigate these competing models in order to posit her own definition of manhood. Guided by Universalist principles, Cary exposes both the falsity of the dominant models of masculinity and what she sees as their inherent spiritual dangers. In their place, she offers a model for men's character and behavior that closely follows the ideals put forward by Universalist advice writers and commentators.

The Evolution of Ideal American Manhood in Early America

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was a pivotal time for redefining manhood in the United States. The dominant concept of "ideal manhood"—in other words the stereotype by which society at large evaluated a man's quality—underwent a distinct evolution as it moved from a community-based sense of masculinity to a market place masculinity based on individual interest and competition. Masculinity scholar E. Anthony Rotundo describes early American concepts of manliness as originating among New England Puritans. Although during this time period, the Puritans ""rarely used words like manhood and masculinity" (terms which didn't come into vogue until the late nineteenth century), the community did have distinct expectations and standards by which to evaluate the worth of men (10).   A man's worth was largely measured by the fulfillment of duty to his family and community and "he could expect to answer to his community if he failed badly" in these duties (12). Puritans also believed that men were ordained by God to be leaders in their homes, but the role of the community was to ensure that the men did not become tyrants. In fact, although the men were granted leadership in their individual homes, they were expected to submit to the demands and needs of the community: "the ideal man, then, was pleasant, mild-mannered and devoted to the good of the community" (Rotundo 13). He

embodied many qualities, including sympathy and submissiveness, that would later be considered feminine or womanly.

Nonetheless, according to Rotundo the New England Puritans had already laid the groundwork for separate spheres ideology. Although the Puritans presented a more androgynous vision of what an ideal man and an ideal woman should be, the social expectations were that certain characteristics came more naturally to men than to women, and vice versa: "Ambition, assertiveness, and a lust for power and fame were thought to be "manly" passions. A taste for luxury, submissiveness, and a love of idle pleasures were considered 'effeminate' passions" (11). Men were also considered to have greater reasoning power than women (11). These beliefs naturally lent themselves to the theory that men were better suited to carry on the public duties of the home and community. However, the differences between the sexes weren't as seemingly codified as they would become in the nineteenth century. Although Puritan women's opportunities were more limited than that of their male counterparts, women still participated in many activities such as trade and warfare. Men, on the other hand, were discouraged from actions of selfish ambition and encouraged to submit to the authority of the community, even while some acts of assertiveness and ambition were tolerated for the good of the community. It was this flexibility in the expected code of behavior among New Englanders that opened the doors

to the American Revolution and eventually to the ideal of the "Self-Made Man" (14-15).

By the latter half of the eighteenth century, the American ideal of manliness was increasingly influenced by the growing success of trade, The Great Awakening, and migration to the western frontiers. These influences, combined with the Puritan acceptance of assertiveness for the good of the community, allowed men to "throw off their belief in the virtue of submission" and prepare "for revolution" (Rotundo 15). During the revolutionary period, "a man was one who resisted arbitrary authority, who refused submission" (Rotundo 16). However, according to Michael Kimmel[2], men still justified their newly declared independence as duty to the community by freeing the newly founded country from the "tyranny of a despotic father" (18).

Two other specific ideals of manhood also faced impeding change following the Revolutionary period. David Leverenz describes two competing paradigms of manhood during the colonial period: the patrician paradigm, which Michael Kimmel labels as "The Genteel Patriarch" model, and the artisan paradigm, labeled by Kimmel as the "Heroic Artisan." Inherited from European culture the Genteel Patriarch model is based upon the aristocratic ideal of manhood and rooted in inherited wealth and land ownership:

At his best, the Genteel Patriarch represents a dignified aristocratic manhood, committed to the British upper-class code of honor and well-rounded character, with exquisite tastes and manners and refined sensibilities. . . manhood meant property ownership and a benevolent patriarchal authority at home, including the moral instruction of his sons. A Christian gentleman, the Genteel Patriarch embodied love, kindness, duty, and compassion, exhibited through philanthropic work, church activities, and deep involvement with his family. (Kimmel 16)

The access to education, economic privilege, and physical resources allowed the Genteel Patriarch access to political and social power, and being esteemed as a man rather than a boy depended upon a man's use of these advantages for the benefit of his family and community (McCurdy 525-26). The patrician model of mascunity was also firmly rooted in the concept of aristocratic privilege which demanded deference from the lower classes (Leverenz 74). However, during the American Revolution, this masculine ideal came under fire. Royall Tyler, offered in his play *The Contrast,* the first American drama produced professionally, a satire of the Genteel Patriarch in the character Billy Dimple as "a flamboyant fop," a man of luxuries and excesses, who seeks to seduce innocent virgins with false promises of marriage (Kimmel 15-16).

Although the model of the Genteel Patriarch still had considerable influence well into the nineteenth century, characterizations like that of Tyler were not uncommon among the American public.

In contrast, the Heroic Artisan is an ideal rooted in the craft guild tradition of Europe. The Artisan model demanded men to be virtuous, loyal, and honest. According to Kimmel, the Heroic Artisan was "stiffly formal in his manners with women" and derived his sense of worth from what he could make with his hands: "On the family farm or in his urban crafts shop, he was an honest toiler, unafraid of hard work, proud of his craftsmanship and self-reliance" (16). American writers like Tyler, in his character Colonel Manly, tried to appropriate this model as an American ideal; however, in the fierce capitalistic environment following the American Revolution, this model was gradually supplanted by what would become the dominant model of American masculinity, the "Self-Made Man" (16-17).

Rooted primarily in communal values rather than strict individualism, ideal manhood during these early periods also differed sharply from later models of masculinity in its promotion of male sentiment and sociability. Mary Chapman and Glen Hendler claim that during this period, "sensibility"—the ability to feel and experience others emotions—was considered a "biological fact," a sort of sixth sense that all people, including men, had and just "as essential to human nature

as sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell" (4). This belief in sensibility

greatly shaped the behavior and social codes of American men.

Chapman and Hendler describe a male "cult of sentiment" which

emerged from the belief in human sensibility and "constructed the figure

of the 'man of feeling' as a male body feminized by affect, a sort of

emotional cross-dresser" (3). Writers like Henry MacKenzie, Laurence

Sterne, Samuel Richardson, J.W. Goethe, and Adam Smith felt that

"sensibility was an ideology . . . encompassing the republican discourses

of both manly virtue and benevolent motherhood" (Chapman and

Hendler 3), and the influence of this philosophy was evident not only in

middle-class men, but also in the behaviors of powerful political figures.

George Washington publicly wept when resigning his commission

(Chapman and Hendler 2), and Alexander Hamilton wrote letters to a

male friend declaring his love comparing his emotions to that of a

jealous lover (Crain 5-6). As strange as such declarations may seem to

modern readers, such sentiments and behaviors were common in the

eighteenth century, and the dominant versions of manhood during this

period reflected a more fluid and flexible range than would later become

the rule. Male friendships during this century were often characterized

by similar declarations of love and emotional and physical intimacy such

as caressing and sleeping in beds together (Crain 16). Men even wrote

and read sentimental novels and were instrumental in establishing this

genre. Sentimental novels, like Charles Brockden Brown's *Clara Howard,* and sentimental poetry by writers such as Whittier and Longfellow enjoyed widespread popularity, and according to P. Gabrielle Forman and Tara Penry, other canonical "masculine" writers such as Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville at times relied on sentimentalism in their works (Foreman 149 and Penry 227).

This sentimental influence upon the model manhood has often gone ignored by modern critics and historians, leading to a very narrow understanding of what constituted ideal manhood in early American society. F.O. Mattheissen in his famous work *The American Renaissance* contrasted what he conceived of as the masculine strengths of his great writers – Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau – with the "sentimental, weak, and domestic writings of women" (Chapman and Hendler 4), and R.W.B. Lewis claimed that truly great American literature hinged on a masculine ideal that portrayed men fleeing the domesticating influence of women in favor of independence and freedom. For these and other mid-twentieth century critics the ideal of early American manhood was clearly definable from the perceived emotionality of women. However, these critics conveniently overlooked the sentimental aspects of early American male identity, choosing instead a myth of a monolithic hyper-masculine male identity.

Feminist scholars later corrected many of the more misogynistic claims made by earlier critics of American literature; however, while early feminist critics may have been instrumental in revealing the destructive effects of the patriarchal system upon women writers and readers, they did little to correct the stereotypical portrayals of masculinity. Instead, the critics relied on the separate spheres model, the very model that misogynistic critics had used for over a century and half to justify relegating women to the status of second class citizens and their writings as second-rate trash. Critics like Baym focused on white, middle-class male conspiracies to maintain oppressive power structures. Jane Tompkins and other feminists described sentimental fiction as promoting a cult of "True Womanhood," which destabilized the dominant male-centered narratives by elaborating "a myth that gave women the central position of power and authority in the culture" (125). These critics were essential not only for helping elaborate the cultural and artistic contributions of American women writers, but they also laid the critical methodology by which later feminist and social critics would begin to examine other categories of difference.

While feminist critics and students of American literature owe much to the groundwork laid by these early feminists, this critical approach greatly confined the study of gender criticism. As I mention in Chapter II, while this early concentration on separate spheres was an

important step in the evolution of feminist criticism, particularly in regard to the examination of unequal power structures between men and women, later post separate spheres criticism has complicated the male/female dichotomy of earlier feminist criticism and focused on the interaction between gender and a number of factors including race, class, ethnicity, region, and religion, and these later critics used this more nuanced approach to add much to the discussion of masculinity. For example, *No More Separate Spheres!* edited by Davidson and Hatcher includes three essays on the construction of masculine identity in the nineteenth century, and Chapman and Hendler's collection of essays examines the interaction of sentimental culture and affect and men's identity. As these post-separate spheres critics reveal, the true culture and writings of early to mid-nineteenth century America were actually quite nuanced and varied. While early feminists noticed ways in which patriarchal ideals constrained and victimized women, later critics examining masculinity began to see that these same stereotypes of manhood, being fictions in themselves, also victimized and constrained the lives of men (Murphy 2), and were not universal in their application across class, racial, and ethnic boundaries.

The Rise of the Self-Made Man

Nonetheless, the masculine ideal that came to be the dominant model for American manhood among nineteenth century middle-class Americans was the idea of the "Self Made Man." Leverenz notes that the image of the "Self Made Man" or entrepreneurial paradigm of American manhood first appears in Cotton Mather's early eighteenth century account of Governor William Phips, whom Mather praises for his ability to "[quell] mutinies on his ships and how he dominated people on ship and shore" (*Manhood* 87). Later, in the late eighteenth century, the model of the Self Made Man began to take more definite shape in the writings of Benjamin Franklin, who in his "rags-to-riches" autobiography emphasized the possibilities of upward class mobility (Leverenz, *Manhood* 74), but the model of the Self Made Man did not become widely accepted until the nineteenth century. While earlier models of manhood were "rooted in the life of the community and the qualities of a man's character" the standard for manhood shifted "from a doctrine of 'usefulness' and 'service' to the preoccupation with the 'self'" (Kimmel 18). Perhaps the most important cause of this change was the "market revolution" taking place in the newly founded country. The government began constructing a national system of transportation, which made trade more profitable. In the years between 1800-1840, the quantity of exported American goods tripled, the percentage of people working

outside of farms grew from 17 to 37 percent, and the banking system expanded from "eighty-nine banks in 1811 to 246 five years later and 788 by 1837" (Kimmel 22). This economic success also fueled westward expansion providing even more opportunities for individual economic gain for the adventurous. Young men no longer had to depend upon inherited wealth or trade guilds for economic success. They could earn financial independence through trade and exploration. Thus, manhood for a large part of the American population came to be defined by how well a man succeeded in financial endeavors, and the public increasingly began to believe that financial success depended more upon a man's hard work than his ancestry. However, this new hope was not without cost.

The linking of masculine identity to success in the marketplace produced considerable anxiety since such success was neither stable nor assured, and manhood had to be "proved constantly" (Kimmel 22-23). This anxiety in turn produced an atmosphere of competition that undermined sociability among males and a change in accepted patterns of behavior. Competitive actions that would have seemed immoral and "unmanly" in previous generations became more expected and tolerated. Kimmel describes this loss of communalism in the face of competition: "Gone were the casual intimacies of boyhood. Gone too was a view that other men—coworkers and friends—could act as moral constraints on

excessive behavior. Instead, other men were potential economic rivals"
(55). With other men reduced to merely competition, the "Self-Made
Man" also became increasingly homophobic and close same sex
relationships came to be considered as "unmanly" (Kimmel 55-56). The
ideal of the Self-Made Man greatly contributed to the ideology of
separate spheres. The life of the Self-Made Man was one of competition
and ambition. Boys were instructed early in the expected behaviors of
this new manhood (Kimmel 55), and interaction with one's mother (and
by extension all women) threatened to "feminize" boys and men (Kimmel
56). Further, as men's success began to be determined more by their
financial success than their family involvement, men began working
longer hours and became increasingly detached from the domestic
responsibilities (Rotundo 27).

By the end of the nineteenth century, this model of manhood
dominated American culture, and its influence is felt even today.
However, it was not the only model of manhood. Earlier Puritan,
patrician, and artisan conceptions still wielded considerable power and
influence (Kimmel 39). Also, newer ideas based on conceptions of
natural men and liberal spirituality also circulated in nineteenth century
America, and individual men and writers often composed alternate
versions of manhood by borrowing from various conceptions and
philosophies. For example, Emerson borrowed the individualistic

emphasis of the self made man, but used this emphasis to ultimately reject the focus of monetary success which was a core feature of the Self-Made man. Despite the growing widespread adoption of the Self-Made man as an ideal, by mid-nineteenth century it was still unclear just what version of ideal manhood would emerge as the dominant discourse on manhood (Kimmel 39).

This crisis of manhood would have been especially evident to Cary as she grew up along the outskirts of Cincinnati. At Cary's birth, the region was still considered the Western frontier. Tales of men such as Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett were idealized in the cultural imagination; however, by Cary's adulthood, the area had seen a large influx of both population and industry. These changes are particularly evident when one compares the landscape she describes in *Clovernook,* the community of her childhood, and *Clovernook, Second Series*, the community of her young adulthood. While the first series describes stubble fields, harvest, and even Native Americans, the second series discusses the view of smoke stacks, pig sties, and the birth of suburbia. These drastic changes also brought with them the market place masculinity of the Self-Made man. Cary's writings are particularly critical of the Self-Made man in his extreme versions. Being rooted in Calvinism, Universalism like Calvinism stressed individual development in regard to how people, both males and females, contributed to the

community at large rather than merely how well individuals provided for their own needs and the needs of their immediate families (Bressler 78). More important than the microcosm of the individual home is the larger family of God. Cary does not uphold one single pre-existing model for ideal masculine behavior. Cary criticizes what she sees as shortcomings in many different models of manhood, yet she also presents most of her male characters as having admirable traits. Her works reveal that the concepts of manhood and the social behaviors expected of men were often destructive forces in the very lives of men that these conceptions seemingly empowered. In her works, men are not uniformly villainous patriarchs; most often they are victims of their own beliefs about masculine identity, and with this revelation, Cary also points to a model of manhood that both conforms to Universalist belief concerning human responsibility and emphasizes what might be viewed as gender fluidity.

Emotional Distance in "My Grandfather"

As I mentioned earlier, the only critical interpretations of Cary's presentation of manliness are put forward by Fetterley and Pryse, who comment on the oppressive effects of patriarchal authority on women in "My Grandfather" and "Uncle Christopher's." The former of these sketches, "My Grandfather," is actually the first sketch in the first series of *Clovernook* tales. The sketch opens with the narrator, a young

woman, describing an evening at home with her parents and two brothers. During the course of the evening, Oliver Hillhouse, a miller employed by the narrator's grandfather, arrives at the house with word that the grandfather is dying. The narrator and her parents then depart to visit the grandfather. After arriving at the grandfather's house, the narrator is relegated to the care of her Aunt Carry, who leads her to the mill, where they meet up with Oliver, who reveals to Carry that he is sad to see her father's passing since he was a good man; however, Oliver is more upset about his status after his employer's death. Oliver and Carry are in love, but Oliver has heard her father say that he will not allow Carry to marry any man who is not a man of property and that her father will make her promise to agree to this stipulation if he should die. Upon returning to the house, the narrator watches while people enter her grandfather's chamber and receive last words. Finally, the narrator, hoping that her grandfather will speak to her enters his chamber. She holds his hand and kisses his forehead, but he only states, "Child, you trouble me" (24). After the grandfather's death, the family learns that Oliver has been named the heir to the entire estate on the condition that he marries Carry. The two marry and take charge of both Carry's and Oliver's mother. The narrative ends with the narrator declaring that during her life she still remembers the sorrow surrounding her grandfather's death but that death is "less terrible to [her] now" (26).

Fetterley and Pryse view the sketch as an introduction to the stories, but moreover they hold that the story is about the way in which patriarchal society dismisses the significance of the female narrator as she seeks to find her own individual voice. The narrator, according to Fetterley and Pryse, is "insignificant" in the life of her family. The critics describe the narrator's initial interaction with her brothers and parents as "playing outside while the rest of the family," particularly the male members, resides in the "circle of significance" (175). Fetterley and Pryse also note that grandfather, too, fails to acknowledge the narrator:

> Death removes the possibility that he will ever recognize or mark her; death requires her to acknowledge that she will never get his attention. Out of such loss, however, she develops the capacity to signify and the determination to be herself one who notices. (176)

Accordingly, the grandfather's final words to his granddaughter symbolize the rejection of her female identity, but the narrator's early rejection at the hands of her family, especially the male members, helps her to develop her voice as Fetterley and Pryse notice. Her silence has enabled her to notice things that others miss, including herself (176), and "marking her own significance is understandably the first act of a consciousness that would wish to mark the significance of others who have also been considered insignificant" (175). In telling her story, the

narrator recognizes that she is a significant person, and in doing so she becomes a champion for others who are oppressed.

While Fetterley and Pryse's focus on the narrator's initiation into artistic life is interesting and makes some valid observations about the narrator's position in the family, the story reveals much more than merely the patriarchal oppression of a young woman. In some respects the story actually affirms the virtue of the Genteel Patriarch model of manhood. The grandfather's position in the family and the community reflects a patrician model of manhood. Like the Genteel Patriarch described by Kimmel, the grandfather bases his concept of manhood upon land ownership. This emphasis is evident in his directions regarding who his daughter is allowed to marry. Oliver reveals these expectations to Carry when explaining why he believes they will not be able to marry: "Almost the last thing your father said to me was, that you should never marry any who had not a house and twenty acres of land; if he has not, he will exact that promise of you, and I cannot ask you not to make it, nor would you refuse him if I did;" (22). Carry's father clearly wants to make sure she marries the "right" man, and for her father, a true man is a man with property. However, the father does not allow his mandate to ruin his daughter's happiness. In a departure from the class conscious model of the Genteel Patriarch, which emphasizes the superiority of the aristocracy and deference from the

"lower classes," the grandfather in this story accepts his worker as an heir, an equal, and since the grandfather has only daughters, he decides to leave his fortune to the man with whom his daughter is in love. This departure from the ideal of the Genteel Patriarch is quite in keeping with the Universalist movement, which began among the working classes and emphasized the "brotherhood" of all humans as equals (Bressler 54). Further, the grandfather also embodies the sense of communal responsibility and ethics required by the Genteel Patriarch ideal. He is "good man, strictly honest, and upright in all his dealings, and respected, almost reverenced, by everybody" (19). This reverence is easy for the reader to imagine given the grandfather's care for the community. Even on his death bed, he has ordered that his mill continue working because in his words his neighbors "could not do without bread because he was sick" (16). The narrator also reveals an anecdote that shows the extent of the grandfather's care for his fellow community members:

> I remember once, when young Winters, the tenant of Deacon
> Granger's farm, who paid a great deal too much for his
> ground, as I have heard my father say, came to mill with
> some withered wheat, my grandfather filled up the sacks out
> of his own flour, while Tommy was in the house at dinner.
> That was a good deed, but Tommy Winters never suspected
> how his wheat happened to turn out so well. (16)

As a sort of aristocratic figure in the community, the grandfather

embodies a sense of nobleness. His charity is so complete, in fact, that

he does not even shame Winters by telling him of the good deed done on

his behalf. Instead, the grandfather quietly substitutes flour from his

private store when he encounters a young man who is struggling

financially with his farm.

Nonetheless, Cary ultimately paints an ambivalent picture of the

grandfather. Although he is admired by his community and acts

compassionately with his family and neighbors, he is cold and distant

with those he cares about. Along with the patrician ideal of manhood

the grandfather's conception of manhood is influenced by a frontier

model of self-made manhood, which required men distance themselves

from "emotional" femininity. This distancing required self control of the

"passions," a control that was not expected of women and very young

children (Rotundo 22). In contrast Universalist writers encouraged

fathers to allow "steady, high, moral love" to govern their interactions

with their children (Weaver 78), but the narrator does not feels this kind

of love from her grandfather. She describes him as "a stern man who

"was uncompromising and unbending," and she recounts hiding in the

mill "to escape from his cold forbidding presence"(19). When the

narrator attempts to comfort and be comforted by her grandfather

during his last moments, he rejects her and leaves her emotionally

abandoned to experience alone the "sorrow" of her first encounter with the death of a loved one. While Fetterley and Pryse focus on how the narrator overcomes the emotional neglect she faces at the hands of her family, Cary also seems to be pointing out a type of victimhood in the grandfather. Unlike the narrator, he is incapable of verbalizing his affection. The closest the grandfather comes to showing his granddaughter affection occurs when he gives her an apple.

> He was a stern man—even his kindness was
> uncompromising and unbending, and I remember of his
> making toward me no manifestation of fondness, such as
> grandchildren usually receive, save once, when he gave me
> a bright red apple, without speaking a word till my timid
> thanks brought out his "Save your thanks for something
> better." The apple gave me no pleasure, and I even slipt into
> the mill to escape from his cold forbidding presence. (19)

Fetterley and Pryse dismiss the tenderness of this event entirely. Focusing on his rebuke for her acknowledgement of the gift, they determine that the narrator will never receive recognition from the grandfather (175), but these critics entirely overlook the fact that this act was an act of recognition. The grandfather has singled her out and offered her a gift, albeit a small gift. However, he is unable to verbalize this recognition of his granddaughter and thus his perceived coldness

drives her to run away. This inability to express himself forever distances him from those he cares about. Not only does the narrator feel emotionally cut off from her grandfather, so too do all the other people he cares about. He is not even able to reveal to Oliver and Carry his ultimate plan to preserve their happiness, so his final moments with them are tainted by fear and dread, since both Oliver and Carry seem to focus more on the prospect of being separated from one another than on their love for the patriarch, and the grandfather is left to die isolated from the fellowship of the community.

Similarly, the other males, to varying extents, face difficulty in expressing their emotions. The narrator's father seems unable to express affection for those he loves. His interaction with his family, like that of the grandfather, is close to non-existent. The only family members he verbally acknowledges are his two sons. Near the opening of the sketch, he rebukes the oldest, and the youngest he teases into crying. Further, the rebuke of the older son's interest in "silly stories" further seems to perpetuate the system of silence the males of this story face. Oliver Hillhouse also seems affected by the social expectation of emotional control in men. Although he is able at one point in the story to verbally express his love for Carry, the narrator comments that the discussion between the two seems to be the first time that Oliver has ever breached the topic with Carry, and he has only done so to say

farewell. Oliver's emotional restraint is also evident at the funeral when the reader compares his behavior to that of the women present. At the funeral, Oliver holds his hands folded over his chest shedding only one or two dignified tears while the women at the funeral appear "pale," sobbing, and with their faces buried in their hands (25). In fact, of all the males in the sketch, the only one who seems to be so far unaffected by the code of emotional restraint is the narrator's younger brother Harry whose youth still keeps him in the realm of the feminine mother. The ultimate tragedy of the story is that the men must inevitably face emotional isolation. While the female characters are free to voice their emotions and make intimate connections, the males restrained by expected codes of behavior never really connect with others. Thus they are excluded from what Universalists would see as full participation in the family of God.

The Indictment of The Self-Made Man in "Uncle Christopher's"

Fetterley and Pryse also see "Uncle Christopher's" as a sketch about a female narrator's "voice" and her ability to defy the demands of patriarchy. The narrative begins three days before New Year's Day as the narrator and her father take their horse and buggy through deep snow to visit "Uncle Christopher," a distant relative of her father's. While visiting Uncle Christopher, the narrator's father bends to the

insistence of Uncle Christopher and his wife that the narrator should remain with them because the weather is too severe for the young girl to suffer a return trip home. Uncle Christopher proves to be a pompous, self-righteous man who rules his household with an iron rod. His wife idolizes him, and his six daughters fulfill his every demand. Also living with the family are a young man named Andrew and a little boy named Mark. Andrew has come to live with Uncle Christopher in order to attend school. Mark, who is Uncle Christopher's grandson, has come to be "straightened" by his grandfather (188). During her stay, the narrator grows particularly close to the boys since the girls who appear to be nearly identical in dress, mannerisms, and appearance do not talk unless their father tells them to do so, and then they speak only on the topic he suggests. The story's initial complication occurs when Uncle Christopher discovers a tiny kitten that Mark has been protecting from the cold by hiding it in his hat in the kitchen. Uncle Christopher marches the boy to the family well and demands that Mark throw the "unclean" animal down the well. Further, the grandfather tells his grandson he must stay outside in the barn until he learns not to question his grandfather. The narrator later finds the boy outside by the well throwing food down to the kitten, which has survived by landing on a small rock shelf jutting from the wall. The narrator notices the boy's hands and feet, which are cracked and bleeding from the cold, and

brings him inside. However, the grandfather quickly determines that the boy's wounds are merely superficial and demands that he return to the snow to walk with bare feet. The next day, Uncle Christopher allows Mark to take one of the horses to town and sell a sack of potatoes that Mark had gleaned and saved in a barrel. The boy earns a dollar for his potatoes, but the next day, the grandfather takes his grandson's dollar to save the souls of the "wine-bibbers" and "mirth-makers who are celebrating the New Year (192). Upon Uncle Christopher's return home that evening, Mark is nowhere to be found until the family members hear the dog and follow the sound of his howls to the side of the well where Mark has drowned, apparently trying to save the kitten, which escapes when Andrew pulls out Mark's dead body from the well. Uncle Christopher is visibly shaken and repents of his hardness on the child, and Mark is buried in the finest coffin money can buy.

For Fetterley and Pryse, the sketch's central importance is "a powerful critique of those discourses of dominance that construct the narrator's and her region's situation, and demonstrates the way regionalism both creates and is illuminated by a feminist analytic" (39). The critics notice how Uncle Christopher dominates his household expecting everyone to "define themselves in relation to him" (40). Fetterley and Pryse focus on the narrator's ability to resist Uncle Christopher's "straightening" and ultimately hold that the narrative

primarily empowers the narrator to write an "alternative discourse,"
which, while it "may not have the weight of Uncle Christopher's Bible
and patriarchal law" (39), is a vehicle for exposing the abusive nature of
one who will likely escape any other justice since he "commands the
discourses of dominance and is supported by the economic, political,
and ideological systems of power they represent" (40). However,
regarding this sketch, Fetterley and Pryse's interpretation ignores the
central theme of the story. While Cary does satirize the harmful effects
of patriarchy on the women of the story and she does present the
narrator as resisting the efforts of Uncle Christopher (and his wife,
Rachel) to "straighten" her by turning her into a silent, colorless clone
like the daughters, the central importance of the story lies in the conflict
between Uncle Christopher and his grandson. Cary is offering a
criticism of the Self-Made Man, and this criticism, I believe has much of
its roots in Cary's Universalist beliefs. Bressler writes that Universalists
were very antagonistic to the social emphasis being put upon the
individual and economic success: "With their characterization of the
universe as absolutely interdependent, egalitarian, and benevolent, they
stood apart from the prevailing culture's exaltation of the individual"
(37), and the ideal of the Self-Made Man was the epitome of this
exaltation of the individual. Cary's sketch indicts Uncle Christopher for
meeting the secular definition of success but failing to meet his

responsibility within the family of God. Although Uncle Christopher

claims that Mark is a wicked, obstinate child who has come to his

grandfather's house to be chastened into morality, Mark's account of his

father's reasoning for sending him differs greatly. The reader learns

through the anecdote that his father has sent him to learn the

intricacies of self-made manhood. Mark reveals that before he came to

his grandfather's house he had a job performing errands for a neighbor

that paid him well, enough to buy most of the things he wanted and

needed for himself, but when Mark is tricked out of a particularly

generous wage, his father appears to feel shame at his son's failure:

> One Saturday night, when he [Mark] had done something
> that pleased his employer, he paid him all he owed, and a
> little more, for being a good boy. "As I was running home,"
> said he [Mark], "I met two boys that I knew; so I stopped to
> show them how much money I had, and when they told me
> to put it on the pavement in three little heaps, so we could
> see how much it made, I did so, and they, each one of them,
> seized a heap and ran away, and that," said Mark, "is just
> the truth."
>
> "And what did you do then?" I [the narrator] asked.
>
> "I told father," he answered, "and he said I was a
> simpleton, and it was good enough for me—that he would

send me out here, and grandfather would straighten me."

(188)

The father's response to his son is not a response to a moral failure, but rather a childhood failure in managing finances. However, for men who ascribe to the model of self-made manhood, financial failure was a failure of manliness far greater than moral inadequacy. Manhood was measured by success in the marketplace (Kimmel 22). Mark's failure indicates not only his own "failure" to embrace his emerging manhood, but also his father's failure to educate and provide an appropriate model of manliness for his son.

Mark's father has sent him to learn how to be a man, and what better model of a Self-Made Man could his father find than the boy's grandfather? Uncle Christopher is a wealthy and successful business man. The narrator's father initially wants to visit Uncle Christopher in order to buy seed for planting in the Spring, and her initial view of Uncle Christopher's farm indicates that he has a large compound with several buildings. Uncle Christopher also shows the self discipline and control which dominates the behavior of the ideal self-made man. Kimmel writes, "The Self-Made Man was a control freak" (45), and Uncle Christopher certainly is the quintessential control freak. He must dominate not only his own emotions and behaviors, but he also demands control of his entire household. He exacts absolute obedience

from everyone in the home, and despite his financial success, well-fed livestock, and "bags of meal and flour, boxes of hickory nuts and apples, with heaps of seed, wheat, oats, and barley" (181), Uncle Christopher does not allow any "useless expenditure" including bowls of water to wash with (182) and holiday dinners (190). Mark's education and treatment he receives also indicates his grandfather's determination to form the boy into a Self-Made Man:

> As he [Mark] said, nobody loved him, nobody spoke to him, from morning till night, unless to correct or order him, in some way; and so, perhaps, he sometimes did things he ought not to do, merely to amuse his idleness. In all ways he was expected to have the wisdom of a man—to rise as early, and sit up as late, endure the heat and cold as well, and perform nearly as much labor. (189)

Uncle Christopher is attempting to "defeminize" the child by distancing the boy from empathy and emotional attachment. This educational process reflects Kimmel's observations that "the strictures of Self-Made Manhood filtered down to younger and younger men, making their boyhoods appear increasingly to be little manhoods" (55). Instrumental to this process was training boys to stand "emotionally alone" (Kimmel 55). In addition to making Mark feel emotionally isolated, his grandfather also attempts to sever his grandson's empathetic

tendencies—tendencies which first lead Mark's father to send him away in the first place—by forcing Mark to throw the stray kitten into the well. Uncle Christopher's efforts, nonetheless, fail to shape Mark into a man. Part of this failure could be due to Uncle Christopher undermining his education by forcing Mark to surrender his dollar he earned and forcing Mark to be submissive. Mark receives conflicting messages from his grandfather. He is told to be manly; however, the grandfather's actions contradict his teachings in that they do not give Mark the opportunity to value his financial success nor do they allow him to exercise independence. The ultimate obstacle to Mark's becoming a Self-Made Man is that the demands of manhood are in direct opposition to the boy's empathetic nature, a nature that Universalists would praise as ideal. In *The Christian Household*, well-known Universalist writer George S. Weaver describes tenderness and sympathy as "beautiful" and "a fruit of Christian love" and then goes on to define the terms by describing the actions of a young child who is moved to tears by the plight of a street dog (111-12). The grandfather's insistence that the boy destroy the kitten demonstrates the grandfather's own spiritual deficiency and "unchristian" behavior. By the story's close, Cary has offered a scathing critique of the Self-Made Man as a destroyer of innocence and life because the grandfather's mandate does not destroy the boy's emotional attachment to the animal, but rather intensifies the

connection and ultimately destroys the boy. However, Mark's death is not merely tragic. His emotional behavior and his sacrifice transform his grandfather:

> The grandfather reached down and lifted the lifeless form of the boy into his arms, where he had never reposed before. He was laid on the settee, by the window; the fine white sheet that I had hemmed, was placed over him; the stern and hard master walked backward and forward in the room, softened and contrite, though silent, except when occasional irrepressible groans disclosed the terrible action of his conscience. (195)

In his death, Mark is allowed to experience the affection of his grandfather. Earlier in the narrative, the child had seen the fine sheet, which the narrator had recently hemmed for her aunt and uncle, and he confided in the narrator, "Is n't it fine and pretty? I wish I could have it over me" (191, sic), but presumably claiming the luxury for himself, the grandfather dismisses the boy and in an eerie moment of foreshadowing tells the boy, "Thoughtless child . . . you will have it over you soon enough, and nothing else about you, but your coffin-boards" (191). The grandfather attempts again here to initiate the boy into the emotional distance required by his preconceived notion of what manhood should be. However, through his death, boy initiates the grandfather into the

realm of feeling and emotional connection needed for all Christians.

Perhaps for the first time in his life, the grandfather feels true affection

for someone other than himself, and the child's death has also broken

the older man's pride. Finally, the sketch's outcome offers an alternative

model for manhood, a manhood based on the Universalist teachings of

self-sacrifice and empathetic connection rather than cold self-

sufficiency.

The Fiction of Manhood in *The Bishop's Son*

While in "My Grandfather" and "Uncle Christopher's" Cary

questions the emotional isolation expected of men in American society,

in her novel *The Bishop's Son* she launches her most complete

exploration of models for American manhood. The novel does have three

major female characters, but the central focus and concern of the novel

appears to be the lives of men and their positions in the community.

The narrative is composed of several interlocking romance plots. The

central plot of the novel involves a love triangle between Samuel Dale, a

young farm laborer, Margaret Fairfax, the teenage daughter of a middle-

class widow, and John Lightwait, a middle-aged Methodist minister and

a bishop's son. Samuel and Margaret initially meet when Samuel saves

her from a venomous copperhead snake. The two instantly fall in love;

however, Margaret's mother, who has just seen the new reverend, John

Lightwait, and learned that he is single, has determined that Samuel is not a fit match for her daughter. The mother then launches a campaign to win the affections of Samuel for herself since he is handsome and helpful around the house, and to match her daughter with Lightwait, whose position and wealth would secure for her daughter and herself a position of power in the community. Samuel, knowing the mother's objections to him, makes a secret love pact with Margaret. In contrast, The new reverend aware of the commitment between the two young people launches a series of deceptions that eventually causes drives a wedge between Margaret and Samuel and gains the affection of the young woman through misdirection and lies.

Samuel seeks to solace his broken heart by immersing himself in serving his church community, while Lightwait seduces Margaret, but without the challenge and competition for Margaret's affection, Lightwait loses interest in marrying her. By quietly forcing Lightwait to marry Margaret, Samuel's last act of love toward Margaret is protecting her reputation from ruin.

The novel closes ten years later at a church conference. Lightwait has left the ministry, and both he and Margaret appear to have lost all their youthful energy and beauty:

> He [Lightwait] was, somehow, without any concerted plans
> of action, to be sure . . .

His beautiful locks were thin and faded, but still dropt
about his eyes now and then, faintly intimating the old
grace; and his broadcloth had more shine about the elbows
and knees than it used to have, and everywhere, hanging
like a dead weight upon his arm, was Margaret, listless and
limp as a rag. Her cheeks had lost their roses, and her eyes
all their merry sparkle—she had two children hanging on
her skirts—robust, rollicking, importunate and
unmanageable . . . You would hardly have recognized the
bishop's son and Margaret, for the same persons they were
ten years ago; not so much for the youth of life that was
gone, as for the youth of heart that was gone. (410-11)

Stripped of his former social standing, Lightwait finds himself and his
family slowly sinking into poverty, and his life is filled not only with
financial hardships but also emotional stress. He and Margaret appear
defeated and joyless, the color having literally left their countenances.
In contrast, Samuel, through his service to the community, has gained
wealth and popularity. Although his Uncle Charles has squandered
Samuel's initial inheritance, Samuel has risen to the rank of regional
bishop, and he is beloved by his congregants who have made him into a
sort of folk hero, the subject of mothers' bedtime stories. Samuel has
also recently married a beautiful young woman, whom an older pastor

describes as "pretty as a rose bud" with a "smile that warmed [him] like sunshine" and a "cloud" of golden curls (414-15).

On the surface, the plot seems to be nothing more than a sensational morality tale for women; however, on a deeper level Cary is both complicating the idea of gender and offering commentary on the models of manhood embodied in each suitor. John Lightwait to a large extent embodies the ideal of the Genteel Patriarch. His position as a reverend has been gained through his father's position as a bishop and his insistence that his son enter the ministry. Lightwait has neither worked for his position nor does he actually want it. Further, his physical appearance reveals that he is a stranger to physical labor. Although Cary as a writer clearly valued mental labor in her life and in her works, she upholds a balance between manual labor and mental labor, and Lightwait's appearance denotes a self-absorbed vanity that prevents any type of manual labor as well as efficient mental exercise and ministry. Margaret, her mother, and the other women in the story are initially impressed with his "nice little hands" with "lovely nails"(18), his fine clothing, his impeccable manners and flattery (40), and the "beauty and abundance" of his hair (73). Cary also reveals in his description a decidedly unmanly character:

> The personality of the man [Lightwait] was to Margaret, who
> had never seen any likeness of him, wonderfully impressive;

> his hands were perfection, his complexion pale, sicklied, as
> it were, with the cast of thought, his eyes of a deep,
> unfathomable blue, and his hair, in its beauty and
> abundance, a glorious wonder. He wore no beard—not a bit,
> and his long wavy locks dropped about his forehead, hung
> full and flowing down his neck, and sometimes fell over his
> face like the tresses of a woman. The color was not very
> definite; one would say brown shading to gold, another gold
> shading to brown. (72-73)

Clearly, Cary uses Lightwait to criticize the Genteel Patriarch model of manhood. He initially impresses the other characters with his outward beauty and refinement, but unlike Cary's earlier depictions of the grandfather in "My Grandfather," she presents very little to admire in Lightwait. Despite Margaret's initial attraction to the man, his description betrays both immaturity and femininity. His hair falls "like the tresses of a woman," and his beardless face reveals that he has not embraced manhood despite the fact that he is old enough to be Margaret's father. It should be noted, however, that Cary's critique of the "femininity" embodied in Lightwait is a criticism only of certain negative traits, such as vanity, self-righteousness, and judgmentalism, commonly associated and even encouraged in nineteenth century women. His later repeated deceit reveals that he lacks moral character.

He is, as his name suggests, a "light weight" of a man, all shine and little substance. Kimmel notes that such negative critiques of "aristocratic conceptions of manhood" and the luxuries associated with it were common in an American society which feared the return of aristocratic domination (19); however, Cary's portrayal of Lightwait is a departure from her earlier presentation of patrician manhood. While in her first works of fiction like "My Grandfather," the Genteel Patriarch lives up to his virtuous responsibilities to the community, Cary presents Lightwait as tainted by his aristocratic origins. Further, Lightwait's embrace of these origins keeps him aloof from his farming class congregants, and this separation would not be acceptable to Cary. According to Bressler, the Universalist movement originated from the working-class—as opposed to the Bostonian elite roots of the Unitarians (Bressler 35), and Universalist meetings were remarkably free of class and gender distinctions (35-37). All members of the community according to a Universalist understanding, would be on equal footing as brothers and sisters of "one common parent" (Frieze qtd. in Bressler 78). In her characterization of Lightwait, Cary reveals the danger of the patriarch model, which lies in its isolation from the community and vulnerability to moral corruption.

Cary also seems to be criticizing evangelical Christianity. While Universalists "saw the utter sacrifice of reason in religious belief" in

evangelicals and worked to expose "what they saw as theological degeneration . . . in popular faith" (56), the movement was particularly antagonistic to Methodists, like Lightwait (61). Cary takes this abhorrence toward evangelicals a step further in this novel, however, just as she does in Hagar, and paints evangelical faith, with its emphasis on individual faith and salvation rather than communal identity, as a morally corrupting force.

Initially, Samuel Dale appears to represent a hybrid sense of masculinity. Cary's most obvious influence in her creation of Samuel Dale is that of the Heroic Artisan. In contrast to the polished appearance and well-educated persuasive speech of John Lightwait, Samuel dresses modestly and uses common language. He derives much of his self worth from his fulfillment of duty to his community, and the quality of his handiwork around the Fairfax cottage rivals that of master artisans. Also like the Heroic Artisan, Samuel's moral code, especially around women, is highly developed. He insists on keeping his word and avoiding every appearance of indiscretion.   However, Samuel also reflects a hyper masculine, beast-man sense of masculinity which David Leverenz claims began to arise in the early nineteenth century with characters such as Natty Bumppo and the recently penned biographies of pioneer explorers such as Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone (Leverenz, "The Last" 28). Both Margaret and her mother view Samuel as "ox-like."

His physical appearance and rustic background also connect Samuel to nature and a sense of bestial identity:

> He [Samuel] possessed neither gracefulness of motion, nor handsomeness of proportion, nor yet that brilliancy of intelligence which speaks for a man while he is silent, and bespeaks his manhood. He was large of person, and ungainly of limb, a laborer born to labor, and as yet, contented with his lot. The conventional proprieties of life seemed to him but impediments and hindrances; he would have nothing of them; the flail and the scythe were pleasanter to his hand than a glove or a book; in short, he was altogether in the rough, but he had a large soul, a sweet and sound heart, and was honest through and through. (10-11)

He is a brute, a far cry from the stylish foppishness embodied in Lightwait. More at home in the fields and forests than at social gatherings, Samuel makes no pretention of refinement; he simply is as nature dictates. Further, he seems to have a special connection with animals. Upon first meeting Samuel, Margaret's dog Wolf instantly bonds with him, but with other men, especially Lightwait, the dog acts aggressively. Although Samuel attends church regularly, he looks to the natural world and "vulgar" places for religious inspiration. Samuel

explains, "I don't find revelation all in the lids of the Bible . . . I find it in the fields sometimes, and sometimes I find it in my own heart, bad as it is" (16).

While Leverenz claims that the accounts of bestialized men portrayed a violent flight from social domestication and femininity ("The Last" 28), Cary's portrayal of Samuel departs from the traditional accounts of men like Boone and Crocket. Cary reveals in Samuel characteristics that the nineteenth century reading public would view as feminine. Unlike Lightwait who appears always calm and calculating, Samuel freely expresses his emotions, even those negative emotions such as sorrow, anger, and jealousy, and most of his actions seem to be responses to his emotions be they romantic affection or jealous anger. Further, one of his favorite activities is walking through a field of daisies and collecting bouquets of wildflowers, and his behavior toward Margaret and toward children he encounters is motherly. When Margaret injures her ankle and falls helpless to the ground, her own mother neglects her while Samuel drops to his knees tending the wound with "the skilful tenderness of one who had done nothing else, but dress wounds all his life"(25, sic). Throughout the novel, he also plays with and comforts young Peter Whiteflock, who is frequently picked on and beaten by his older siblings, and Samuel even agrees to accept custody when the boy's father predicts his own death.

In the two characters of Lightwait and Samuel, Cary is clearly complicating nineteenth century conceptions of manhood which depended upon the ideology of separate spheres. Both men represent masculine ideals, yet they also embody stereotypes of femininity, and how these "feminine" qualities manifest determines the worth of each man. Lightwait reflects the superficial stylishness and vanity which according to Rotundo were believed to be characteristic of women (11). Lightwait's gossiping, deceit, and plotting are also characteristics that would be regarded as "feminine." Manliness would be perceived as manifesting more outwardly competitive and aggressive behaviors (Rotundo 11). Even his physical body which is beautiful and slight reflects a feminine ideal of beauty. In short, Lightwait's feminine qualities are all those negative qualities traditionally associated with women. In contrast, Samuel's nurturing nature, gullibility, and emotionalism, in contrast to his highly masculinized appearance and physical abilities, reflects many of the angelic ideals connected with feminine domesticity. Further, in nineteenth century America, these perceived traits were the very characteristics that gave rise to the notion of the "angel in the house," who as "chosen vessels" needed to be protected from the "competitive and ugly," male-dominated public sphere. By showing these feminine and masculine ideals simultaneously in individual characters, Cary portrays gender as a more

fluid conception than would be generally perceived. Within every man, and by extension every woman are traits that would be considered both "masculine" and "feminine," and if every person has both qualities then prescribed gender behavior is a fiction thrust upon people by social rather than natural forces. This gender fluidity was also characteristic of Universalist practices and theology. Universalist were united in the assumption that all people, both male and female, were created in the image of God (Bressler 54). As such, there would not be any significant differences between men and women since both would reflect the divine character of God. This fluidity of gender is also evident in the denomination's embrace of female leadership. Universalists were more accepting of female ministers and lay leadership and their colleges were some of the first co-educational colleges in the U.S. (Bressler 90). One universalist writer even advocated that both men and women should aspire to the "Highest Form of Manhood" (qtd. in Bressler 92).

In recognizing gender stereotypes as a fiction, however, Cary also reveals the dangerous implications of masculine stereotypes to the development of men's self-confidence and happiness. Leverenz notes that "classic" American writers such as "Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, and Whitman find their most original voices in responding to the pressures and conflicts of American manhood" (*Manhood* 3). Although many feminists paint the American stereotypes of masculinity

as a fear of feminine influence, the writings of mid-nineteenth century American authors reveal that the central motivational factor is rooted in male rivalry and fear of humiliation by other men (Leverenz, *Manhood* 4). Leverenz also concludes that one of the most important aspects of American Renaissance writers is that they "try to disorient and convert their readers, especially male readers, from one style of manhood to another" (*Manhood* 5). Cary's novel functions similarly. The central conflict in the novel is really between Lightwait and Dale as each man responds competitively for Margaret's affection, but Cary reveals how destructive this competition, as well as the masculinization process in general, is to both characters as they become the victimized by internalized gender stereotypes.

Lightwait's behavior, reminiscent of the monstrous behavior of Eunice Wurth in *Hagar, A Story for Today*, could be construed as evil. He knowingly undermines the love between Margaret and Samuel through lies and gossip, and then he seduces a young virgin with no intent of marrying her. His acts are fundamental acts of hypocrisy in that all the while he carries out his plan, he is a minister preaching a message of upright righteousness. However, Lightwait did not begin his life as a sinister seducer of the innocent or a hypocrite. As a young boy, he was emotional and exuberant and held love and affection for others, particularly a young beggar girl who shows him kindness when other

boys in the neighborhood pick on him, but after his older sister disgraces the family by becoming romantically involved with a poor student at a nearby college, Lightwait's father determines that his son will not shame him. His son will be not only a man, but he will also become a preacher. The father begins his "education" of his son by separating him from all that he loves:

> "Your mother and I have concluded to make a preacher of you, my son," says the bishop; and denuding the kite of its very magnificent tail, with a light dash of his hand, he tossed it into the fire.
>
> "O father! father!" cries John; and then he fell kicking and screaming and was led away by the ear, and locked fast in a closet.
>
> After three hours of solitary confinement, he was informed by the bishop, speaking through the key-hole, that if he could behave himself, having no more to do with kites and little beggar girls, he might come out!" to which he replied only by sullen sobs, and kicks against the door. Three hours more produced in some sort the desired effect, and he was let out and sent to bed supperless, for his obstinacy . . . Thus the work of making a preacher of the

bishop's son began, and the reader knows already how it

ended. (28)

The father instructs the boy early in the self-control and emotional

coldness that comes to mark Lightwait's behavior throughout his adult

life. Further, Lightwait's father enforces the patrician ideal of manhood

in his son, telling him to abide by the strictures of class barriers. As a

member of the privileged class, Lightwait must be above associating with

"little beggar girls." Further, his life will not be a life of his choosing, but

rather a vocation inherited from his father. In a very real sense,

Lightwait becomes the man he is educated to become, not the man he

wished to be. The competitive, class-conscious model of masculinity he

has inherited ultimately leaves him a shell of a man, cut off emotionally

from his community and stuck in a joyless marriage.

Samuel, too, has been victimized by his own conception of

manhood. He has adopted an ideal of manhood that is defined not only

by duty and high moral character but also by its refusal to admit moral

weakness in others. Early in the narrative, Samuel is constantly

manipulated by Mrs. Fairfax, and later he loses his first love. Upon first

meeting Mrs. Fairfax, Samuel promises that he will not speak openly of

his love for Margaret until a year has passed and she has reached her

seventeenth birthday. Although Mrs. Fairfax's words to Samuel indicate

that she will support his courting of her daughter, her actions quickly

indicate otherwise. Not only does she push her daughter toward Lightwait, but she also maneuvers to always keep Samuel isolated from her daughter. Despite Mrs. Fairfax's obvious intentions, Samuel maintains his promise, and he regularly assists Mrs. Fairfax with chores around her house. On one occasion he even gathers wild strawberries at her request and then delivers the berries to Lightwait as a gift. Samuel's acquiescence to the demands of Mrs. Fairfax allows her to take advantage of his good character, but they almost drive away Margaret, who believes he is indifferent to her. As outrageous as Mrs. Fairfax's behavior toward Samuel is, ultimately her interference proves to be harmless because Margaret faithfully clings to the hope that Samuel feels love for her. However, the ease with which Mrs. Fairfax is able to manipulate Samuel exposes his "fatal" flaw, his submissiveness to those in authority, a submissiveness on which John Lightwait capitalizes. Despite Samuel's knowledge that Lightwait is pursuing Margaret, Samuel unquestioningly believes Lightwait's insinuations that Margaret is indifferent and possibly unfaithful to Samuel. Samuel instantly breaks off his engagement with Margaret and basically gives her to his competitor. Samuel's rejection of Margaret is particularly absurd given the facts that Margaret has promised to marry him and that near the middle of the novel after Lightwait manipulates the public into incarcerating Samuel, Margaret makes herself physically ill, literally

wasting away out of love and concern for Samuel. His surrender to

Lightwait also might indicate another more troublesome reason that

Samuel rejects Margaret: He may not trust her because she is a woman.

He is more comfortable placing his faith in a man he dislikes than in a

woman he loves. Although Samuel in many ways resembles the

Universalist ideal of Christian character and the novel's close seems to

indicate that Samuel is an ideal model for manhood, his rejection

ultimately has destroyed the woman he loves. She is left hurt,

humiliated, and shamed, and by the close of the novel, she hangs "like a

dead weight" and is "listless and limp as a rag" nearly "unrecognizable"

to those who knew her (Cary 410-11). Samuel's later position of

influence and marital happiness cannot undo or make up for his

actions. He may be a truly good man, but he like every other person is

also a truly flawed man.

"My Grandfather," "Uncle Christopher," and *The Bishop's Son* all

reveal that men have a responsibility to form connections with their

fellow humans and that it is this membership in the human community,

which provides balance to individuals. Cary soundly rejects the rigidity

and self-centeredness of the Self-Made Man, yet she does not whole-

heartedly embrace earlier models like that of patrician or artisan

manhood. To be an ideal man is to look both outward and inward

simultaneously. Cary calls for men to meet the needs of their

communities but also to look inside to their unique inner self and find inner light. Only by this simultaneous examination of self and community can men live up to a Christian Universalist ideal which calls for all people to develop their individual gifts to better serve the family of God.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANGELIC CHILD AND THE OPPRESSION OF CHILDREN IN

CARY'S FICTION FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Just as nineteenth century Americans were attempting to redefine womanhood and manhood, so too was the nation's conception of childhood and the legal and social status of children undergoing radical alteration. It only makes sense that Cary's concern with the domestic realm would not be confined merely to the roles of men and women; however, not one Cary critic has really addressed Cary's presentation of children as a response to her historical context. In fact, analyses of Cary's depictions of children and childhood have most often been subsumed in a discussion of class. For example, Elizabeth Schultz, in her analysis of Uncle Christopher and his treatment of the children in his home, states that Cary shares with Herman Melville "a concern with class inequalities and with wage slavery engendered by capitalistic production" (82). Fetterley and Pryse also conflate the issues of childhood and class declaring that in Cary's fiction, "parents form one class and children another" (299). In truth, Cary does display an awareness of class in her works as she populates her fiction with a variety of personages living in a socially stratified society. She reveals this preoccupation with class in the preface to her second collection of

Clovernook sketches when she expresses concern about both the public's lack of "sympathy for the poor and humble"(vi) and the prejudicial stereotypes which characterize the rural farming classes as "different," "inferior," and "entitled to only . . . peculiar praise" (vii). In contrast, she states a desire for representing the rural farming class as they actually are rather than as conforming to the stereotypes presented by the "masters of literature" (vi).   Nonetheless, reducing Cary's depictions of child abuse and neglect to class commentary, as critics like Fetterly and Pryse have done, undermines Cary's interest in her culture's redefinition of childhood and her concern over the mistreatment of children. Further, in interpreting family dynamics merely as class dynamics, these critics ignore the way in which the children in Cary's texts sometimes function metaphorically to enhance her religious ideals. Indeed, Cary's presentation of childhood is perhaps one of the most important aspects of her fiction because she portrays childhood in both a literal and a metaphoric fashion, particularly in her novel *Married, Not Mated* and her children's collection titled *Snow-Berries: A Book for Young Folks.* As a universalist writer holding the belief that all people regardless of age, class, or race are a part of the family of God, Cary uses her portrayals of children to criticize both the evangelical attitudes toward childhood and the newly emergent liberal approaches to childrearing, and she also presents childhood as a

metaphor for people of other races, whom she depicts as children of God – children who are in need of both protection and guidance.

Evangelicals and Child Abuse

At her most obvious, Cary's depictions of children renounce the beliefs of Christian evangelicals who held that children were base, animalistic creatures in need of religious discipline and salvation. Although most modern readers would find such a negative view of infancy and childhood foreign or even monstrous, this unsympathetic portrayal of childhood was commonly understood as truth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Children were also seen as evil, tainted by original sin. The influence of evangelical and Calvinistic doctrines held that children were primarily unenlightened, sinful creatures in danger of damnation. Puritan Reverend Benjamin Wadsworth even described newborn infants as "filthy, guilty, odious, abominable . . . both by nature and practice" (Mintz 11). To counter this belief in the damnation of children, families began religious instruction as soon as possible, and fathers, as divine representatives and the source of financial security in the family, served as the supreme religious and material authority over their children (Mintz 15). The dominant colonial depiction of children also conceived of childhood as a period of "deficiency and incompleteness," in which infants were seen as

"animalistic" because they could not speak or stand. Accordingly, a parent's job was to hurry children's progression to adulthood through early work and responsibility (Mintz 3). These beliefs led to a number of restrictive and abusive practices aimed at ushering children into adulthood as quickly as possible (Mintz 3); parents routinely beat children with sticks, whips, and other items, forced infants to wear corsets that made them sit upright, drugged babies with opiates, and participated in a number of other questionable practices (Russell 35).

By the nineteenth century, childrearing practice had begun to become more humane, but this evolution still had not completely saturated the country. While in the urban North, Puritan and other evangelical influences were becoming displaced by more liberal religious beliefs and humanistic philosophies, the western frontier was undergoing a "revival" of evangelical fervor as non-formalist evangelicals like Baptists and Methodists took root (Johnson 17). These evangelical teachings, spurred by dictum's like "Better whipt, than Damn'd," emphasized the use of physical punishment as a reformer of children's innate sinfulness (Heywood 100). Apparently, evangelical parents overwhelmingly subscribed to this prescription for violence. Colin Heywood states that in the nineteenth century about seventy-five percent of children in the U.S. experienced being beaten with instruments ranging from wooden switches to horsewhips and that

although such beatings were not typically a daily occurrence, neither were they rare occurrences (100).

In contrast, Universalists who urged a gentler approach to childrearing were one of the earliest American denominations to abjure corporal punishment. George S. Weaver, a prominent nineteenth century, Universalist advice writer labels "the rod" and other such implements of physical punishment as "an evil in the family" and states that instead of attempting "break" children parents should seek to "make, or mould a child's spirit" and to "win" obedience from children through "a calm, even-handed system of kind and gentle government, in which the persuasive power of love, directed by wisdom, mingles as the chief element" (Weaver 77-78).

Cary in keeping with her Universalist roots, shunned the rigid childrearing practices which were especially prominent on the frontier in which she grew up. In fact, one of the most obvious themes that appears in her writing is her critique of child abuse, especially that which takes place in the name of religion. This type of religiously motivated child abuse is a recurrent and conspicuous feature in Cary's writing.

One of the most obviously "heaven minded" child abusers in Cary's fiction is Uncle Christopher. Although the centerpiece of "Uncle Christopher's" is Christopher's physical and emotional abuse of his

grandson, critics have not addressed this abuse in terms of its religious significance. Fetterley and Pryse view the story as a sort of dialectic between the patriarchal declarations of Uncle Christopher, which demand silence and obedience from others, and the feminine voice of the narrator, who gains freedom through storytelling (39). In contrast, Shultz compares Uncle Christopher's farm to a factory and notes how the inhabitants of the household are like factory workers toiling to provide material production (91). Shultz also points out that Uncle Christopher, in addition to his lack of toil, treats himself to luxuries and vanities. He purchases for himself fine, stylish clothing, but mandates that his wife and daughters wear identical, drab brown flannel dresses, and he dresses his two wards, Mark and Andrew, poorly. For Schultz, the members of his household become merely "wage slaves" who must satisfy Uncle Christopher's desire for luxury and power (Schultz 88).

Neither of these interpretations recognizes how much conservative childrearing practices, rooted primarily in evangelical Christian doctrine, enable Uncle Christopher's extreme behavior toward his grandson Mark. In Chapter III, I note how many of Uncle Christopher's behaviors emerge from his attempts at emulating masculine stereotypes, but understanding Christopher's evangelical notions about childhood can help the reader see how these conceptions not only interact with Uncle Christopher's masculine stereotypes but they also help to generate these

stereotypes and enable his abusive behavior. The narrator's initial

description reveals this interaction:

> I soon discovered by his conversation, aided by the
>
> occasional explanatory whispers of his wife, that he was one
>
> of those infatuated men who fancy themselves "called" to be
>
> teachers of religion, though he had neither talents,
>
> education, nor anything else to warrant such a notion,
>
> except a faculty for joining pompous and half scriptural
>
> phrases, from January to December (177).

Uncle Christopher's evangelical fervor and self-proclaimed calling to

evangelize is emblematic of the growing movement of uneducated bi-

vocational ministers on the frontier (Johnson 17), and in this quote, the

reader learns of both the narrator's and Cary's disdain for the religious

self righteousness embodied in people like Uncle Christopher. Nearly all

that motivates him is his belief that he is God's representative on earth,

especially in his home, and that his spiritual responsibility is to save

others from the fires of hell—a task he accomplishes through physical

abuse, constant preaching, and quoting scripture, both real and

imagined. The reader first glimpses Uncle Christopher's abusive

tendencies when the narrator first meets Mark. The boy enters the

house laughing, but his grandfather quickly silences him by quoting

verse three of Proverbs 26:   "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,

and a rod for the fool's back!" (179). Christopher views his grandson, who is an emotionally empathetic boy, as "wicked and troublesome" (180), and he declares his desire to "change the boy into a man" (181). To accomplish this task, Uncle Christopher feels perfectly justified to both threaten and enact physical violence upon the child. The grandfather believes that the use of extreme punishment—in the form of physical beatings, forcing the child to walk barefoot in the snow, and ordering the child to drown his pet kitten—will banish Mark's supposed "wickedness." Cary chooses an interesting voice of wisdom in the narrator, who is both a child and female and who calls attention to the extreme notions of evangelical instruction that taught children were depraved and sinful while men were empowered by God to enforce His will in their families. Cary's choice of the child narrator in this sketch and others is also indicative of the Universalist belief that children could serve as teachers for adults. Universalists believed that children, like adults, were often prone to be governed by selfishness (Weaver 110), and they tended to hold the Enlightenment view of children as a blank slate which developed through mirroring the character of their parents (Weaver 106). Nonetheless, Universalist teachings also held that children had a role in helping parents achieve their potential and develop their character as they met the regular challenges and

responsibilities of childrearing**.** Weaver describes the coming of a child to a family as a time of training for the parents:

> The birth of a child in a family is a good omen. It is sent as a teacher. It has a great moral mission. It must be guarded with *care*. It must be managed with *prudence*. It must be nurtured with *tenderness*. It must be provided for with *diligence*. It must be reared with unselfish *love*. It must be educated with *judgment*, and trained with moral *rectitude*. And this care, prudence, tenderness, diligence, love, judgment, and rectitude, are so many virtues which the little child is every day impressing upon the hearts of its parents with a steadily increasing force. (108)

Although Christopher has attempted to educate with judgment and prudence, he has failed to develop the other traits of care, love, diligence, tenderness, and rectitude. Uncle Christopher's failure to develop all the necessary traits of liberal Christian love in his child rearing, has become dangerously imbalanced.

Children also had another important role within the family for Universalists. Weaver writes,

> Children help to keep alive our own childhood. They will not let us forget that we were once children. They are reliving our lives before our eyes. Sad, sad, it is for a man

when he forgets he was once a child. He becomes petrified,-
- a rock, cold, hard, unyielding. (Weaver 104)

Unlike Mark and the child narrator who make empathetic connection
with others, the grandfather has become so "cold, hard, and unyielding"
that he attempts to banish one of the truly spiritual qualities in Mark,
his sympathy for living things—a character trait which Weaver lists as a
central responsibility in Christian children. Weaver goes even so far as
stating that children who do not show sympathy are not *Christian*
children (104-105).   Cary takes this teaching a step further to show that
such disconnection from sympathetic connection endangers life itself.
The grandfather's refusal to submit to his true appointed role within the
family directly contributes to Mark's death. The spiritually pure boy
cannot survive in a world that demands he give up his Christian
sympathy. Further, Uncle Christopher in viewing Mark, the narrator,
and all other children, as "wicked" has forgotten his own childhood, and
it is this "forgetfulness" that Cary reveals in Christopher that is truly
"wicked." Instead of protecting his grandson, Uncle Christopher's
"righteous discipline" kills the grandson by the close of the story.

Child Labor on the Frontier and in *Married, Not Mated*

Despite the propaganda of Western promotionalists, life for most
residents in Ohio was a life of heavy toil. Western promotionalists

painted the West as a region where one could easily support a family

(Kolodny 164) and the land was "literally flowing with milk and honey"

(Holly, qtd in Kolodny 164). Cary herself mentions these stereotypes in

Clovernook, Second Series where she criticizes other writers who wrote

about the West but were only "familiar with wealth and splendor" (363),

but the actual reality of the frontier differed sharply from these idealistic

portraits, particularly for frontier children, whose lives matched neither

the idyllic images of the Western promotional propaganda nor the newly

emerging ideals of sheltered childhoods taking root among middle-class

urban children. The nineteenth century was a time of transition, in

which actual children's experiences varied widely across economic,

racial, and regional boundaries. Historian Steven Mintz describes this

reality: "At no point in American history was childhood as diverse as it

was in the mid and late nineteenth century" (134). While childhood for

middle-class urban children came to be a protected time of play and

education, frontier children were ushered into the world of physical

labor. During this time period, because of the rapid growth of

industrialism and capitalistic production and the reduced access to

child labor, child labor actually increased among the working classes

and on the frontier (Zelizer 5-6), where "their labor was essential to their

family's survival" (Mintz 134). Parents commonly compelled six and

seven-year-old children to begin working to supplement the family

income through tasks like caring for younger siblings, gathering eggs, and chasing birds from crops (Mintz 135), and by the time children reached their early teens they were working in adult tasks like milking cows and washing laundry (Heywood 37). Children were seen legally as "assets of estates in which fathers had a vested right" (Grossberg 238); in effect, children were property existing for the economic benefit of the family.   Mintz describes a "troubling historical irony at work" during this period:

> The very period that freed middle-class children from work and allowed them to devote their childhood years to education also made the labor of poorer children more essential to their families' well-being than in the past, and greatly increased the exploitation that these children suffered . . . the growth of industry, the commercialization of agriculture, and the expansion of a market economy widened the gulf between middle-class and laboring children and generated new kinds of child labor that differed radically from the household-based activities that young people had performed in the past. (Mintz 92-93)

 These new forms of child labor were also more vigorous and dangerous than the work practiced by earlier American child workers. By the 1870 census, one eighth of all children in the U.S. were working, many of

them in dangerous situations (Zelizer 6), and many of these children in harm's way were on the frontier.

Cary's writings as a body also starkly question this presentation of the West. Aiming to show her childhood home as neither "less lovely [n]or more exposed to tearful instances than it is" (*Clovernook, Second Series* 363), Cary presents her Ohio as a region of both wealth and poverty. Although about half the sketches in the first volume of Clovernook open with references to abundant harvest, the lives of Clovernook inhabitants find "unremitting labors" (Kolodny 182), and much of this labor is carried out by children. In story after story, Cary depicts children working as hard, if not harder, than their parents or guardians to ensure the prosperity of their family, and at times, the children's only reward is death. In fact, references or depictions of child labor—including planting, harvesting, laundry, cooking, sewing, nursing sick parents and grandparents, protecting livestock, and training colts— appear in all three of Cary's novels and in more than twenty of her sketches.

In most instances, Cary presents child labor as destructive to the lives of children. In "Margaret Fields," Cary reveals Margaret as a six year old child running an entire household while her hypochondriac mother lies in bed all day, and another child in the sketch suffers bruises on his feet from his work as a gardener (*Clovernook, Second*

Series 151). Cary also reveals how child labor in the West deprived

children of educational opportunities. Mintz states that while urban

children of the nineteenth century typically attended school nine months

a year, rural children usually attended school only six months a year so

that they could work with their parents during the rest of the year (Mintz

135). Likewise in the sequence of sketches about the Claverel family,

Cary reveals that at least some of Clovernook's boys attend school only

three months a year since their parents need the extra labor the rest of

the year (*Clovernook* 217).

Some children in Cary's rural Ohio pay the ultimate price of child

labor. During her illness, Nanny from *Hagar, A Story for Today*

continues to carry on nearly all the household drudgery in her home,

while most of her adult family members do nothing to alleviate her work

load, and as a result of the family's reluctance to help, Nanny eventually

dies. A similar fate befalls James Graham in *Married, Not Mated.*

Orphaned as a child and raised by his grandmother, James is cruelly

beaten and forced to labor ceaselessly for his grandmother who keeps

him hidden away in her room. When James becomes ill, his uncle and

the servants plead with the grandmother to cease beating the child and

be less demanding in regard to the child's housework, but the

grandmother refuses to admit the child's sickness and forces him to

work until he literally drops dead. She sends him outside in the cold to

pick flowers for the house. After the boy has been gone for several hours, his uncle Henry searches for him and returns to the house with James, who is "white and cold," still clutching the flowers he has been sent to gather "in one stiffened hand . . . his hair and woolen frock hung heavy with the dew" (119). Such accounts of child labor reveal Cary's criticism of frontier attitudes that regarded children as economic assets and property of their parents or guardians. Although such principles were no longer the dominant view across the United States at the time, they still had considerable sway on the frontier (Mintz 81).

Nonetheless, Cary's view toward child labor seems to be ambivalent. While she criticizes the abusive or excessive use of child labor, she also recognizes it as a necessity for the survival of many children. This message is perhaps clearest in Cary's children's fiction. In her collection titled *Snow-Berries: A Book for Young Folks*, Cary includes two sketches—"The Weaver's Daughters" and "The Charmed Money"—with conspicuous messages concerning child labor. Noticeably set in an unnamed European country in the past complete with castles, monasteries, wandering minstrels, kings, and princes, "The Weaver's Daughters" relates how a young orphan girl through her positive attitude, charity, and craftsmanship becomes a queen. The story opens describing two orphaned sisters Agnes and Elthea, who must weave everyday to earn money for food. Agnes is a melancholy

character, who concentrates only on work and refuses to play, sing, or dance. In contrast, Elthea sings at her loom and claims that she cannot understand why it should be "wicked to keep the heart light just because the hands have to be busy" (72). When a wandering minstrel visits the sisters' home and asks for shelter from an impending storm, Agnes refuses to offer the minstrel hospitality, but Elthea gives the minstrel her food and tells him that he can remain in the house until the storm abates. While in the home, the minstrel reveals that he is on his way to the nearby monastery so that he can pray for the soul and sing songs in honor of a recently deceased king. Elthea is so impressed by the minstrel's "beautiful spirit" that she later agrees to marry the minstrel and travel with him, but her new husband soon reveals that he is in fact really a king. He had left his kingdom to mourn the death of his father, but he would return celebrating his marriage to his new bride. Targeting children, the tale seems to portray work as a potential avenue for play. Agnes who finds no joy in her work also finds that her work is unproductive. Despite Agnes's concentration on her work, the cloth in her loom is always shorter than her younger sister's (72). Further, Cary demonstrates that compassion and love lighten the burden of heavy work:

> Elthea was thinking of the minstrel, and hardly heard what
> her ill-natured sister said. She was thinking, not so much

> of his beautiful locks, and not so much of his fair face, as
>
> she was thinking of his beautiful spirit, for it was that which
>
> made him seem so beautiful after all; and as she thought,
>
> her fingers grew nimble, and her shuttle flew just as if it had
>
> wings, and the hours of the day seemed almost like
>
> moments, and before she had dreamed of it, it was night,
>
> and her task was done; and while Agnes still sat scolding
>
> and fretting over her unfinished work, she was away to the
>
> convent with her full measure of cloth. (83)

As Elthea's heart fills with joy and love rather than resentment, her work becomes a lighter task so that she finds that weaving becomes "an easy thing" that flows naturally from her (83). The story seems to reveal an ethical compromise concerning child labor reform. Child labor was an economic necessity for many families during the nineteenth century (Heywood 107), and while Cary cautions her adult readers to be careful about how their children work, she appears to be encouraging her child readers to find moments of joy and play in the mundane tasks they are assigned. Ultimately, however, Cary undermines this positive image of child labor. Even though the sisters live next door to a convent of potential mother figures who could shelter the girls, the two orphaned sisters must weave ceaselessly out of necessity because no one will care for them. The church remains oddly aloof, and does not even

consistently support the two sisters through purchasing the orphans'

crafts.   Further, the story emphasizes not the work that the girls

perform but the empathy of which they are capable. Elthea is not

rewarded because of how long or how hard she works. She finds reward

for the sympathy she shows the minstrel, and, ironically, a large part of

that reward is that neither she nor her sister will ever have to work

again. The story, therefore, becomes not so much an apology or

endorsement of child labor as a lesson to her readers (who more than

likely were middle and upper-class children unaccustomed to work)

concerning the need for sympathy, especially for children who faced

economic hardship.

  "Charmed Money," like "The Weaver's Daughters," is set in a

European setting and portrays a similar message for Cary's child

readers. The story centers upon the friendship of two boys: a poor

farming boy named Jerry Mason and an upper middle-class boy named

Henry Gordon. As they grow into adulthood, Henry, unaccustomed to

physical labor, squanders his wealth and leads both himself and his

mother into poverty, but Jerry, whose strong work ethic has helped him

become wealthy, decides to provide security for Henry and his mother.

Although Jerry's labor is a necessity in his family since he is the only

child in a single parent home, he, like Elthea, finds substantial rewards

in his work:

> He did not believe, for the moment, that the king's garden
> contained anything more delightful than did his mother's.
> But even if that were possible, he thought the king could not
> enjoy its beauties half so much as he, because his pleasure
> was more than half derived from the fact that himself had
> plowed and sowed the garden, and that the fruits and
> flowers before him were his, as they could not have been if
> another than himself had done the work. (132)

Jerry finds greater beauty in his home and garden because they are the result of his own effort rather than merely products purchased at the market. Further, his pleasure at surveying his handiwork elevates his spirit causing him to forget "his bare feet . . . patched trousers . . . and how tired" he is (132-33). He even feels that "the king could not be so happy as he" (132). In contrast, Jerry's friend Henry, having been sheltered from true labor by his class conscious mother spends his money on frivolities, and never learns to work or value work:

> Henry has been at home a long time, too spending his time
> in idleness and in worse than idleness, so rumor says, and
> that things are growing from bad to worse with the Gordons.
> Still they manage to keep up an outside show, and hold
> their heads much above working-people like the Masons.
> (151)

While Jerry has steadily been bolstering his family's financial security,

Henry has concerned himself only with the outward trappings of a

middle-class life. Near the close of the story, Henry and his mother find

themselves "reduced to the last sixpence . . . lamenting their hard

fortune, and blaming each other . . . and blaming everything but their

own foolish pride and perverseness" (153-54). The family is facing

complete financial ruin, and when Jerry arrives at their house to offer

help, both the mother and son fear that the footsteps they hear are

those of a creditor coming to seize their home (154).

On the surface, "Charmed Money" follows the typical formula of

early nineteenth century children's literature described by Daniel

Rogers: common place events in which the child hero must relinquish

play and resist the influence of their less dependable peers in favor of

patience and perseverance (357). However, when read in the context of

Snowberries, which includes "The Weaver's Daughters," the reader can

see that Cary tempers her presentation of children's work with a

message of sympathy—an ideal closely related to her Universalism.

Despite Jerry's initial happiness and the happy ending of the story, from

the beginning of the story Cary depicts the relationship between Jerry

and Henry to emphasize that life for Jerry is not always joyful. Jerry,

unlike his friend, still wears patched clothing and has no shoes on his

feet. Initially, neither Henry nor his mother attempts to alleviate the

poverty of Jerry and his mother. In fact, Henry's mother allows her son to visit the Mason family and eat dinners with them, but neither visits the Masons herself nor invites them to dinner at her home. Despite the relationship of her Henry and Jerry, her family's wealth, and the proximity of the two homes, Henry's mother shows no empathy for Jerry's family and refuses to offer either aid or companionship to Jerry's mother.   Further, she disapproves of the boys' friendship and sends Henry to boarding school. Henry similarly shows a lack of sympathy for his friend even before he leaves for boarding school. He does not notice his friend's poverty, and when he learns that he is going away to school, Henry quickly forgets his initial sadness upon seeing his new clothing and school supplies. After his return, Henry has grown even less caring of his friend. He neglects visiting Jerry and delivers a painful insult to his former friend when he sees Jerry attempting to write a letter using cabbage leaves and twigs. In contrast, the emotionally vulnerable Jerry is the hero of the story and he is rewarded with love and financial wealth. In the reversal of fortune, Cary not only reveals the potential economic volatility of life, but she also emphasizes the ideals of sympathy and forgiveness, both of which are listed by Weaver as characteristics of Christian childhoods (109-10). This message was most likely targeted toward children who did little work since the children's literature industry in antebellum America was targeted toward the moral

instruction of middle-class children (Mintz 82). Ultimately, since they themselves did not most likely work, the middle-class child readers of both the "Weavers' Daughters" and "The Charmed Money" would be challenged not by the superficial edict to work joyfully, but rather by the knowledge of less fortunate children and the need for empathetic action toward those children, so that perhaps those children would no longer need spend their childhood in grueling physical labor.

The Birth of Liberal Childhood

As I have already mentioned earlier in this chapter, the dominant view of childhood underwent significant change in the United States during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While Americans of earlier periods tended to view children as incomplete, animalistic, and sinful, by the nineteenth century a number of influences contributed to a more positive view of childhood. Enlightenment writers such as John Locke stated that children were blank slates that needed to be taught and prepared for adult life rather than beaten into submission to avoid the fires of hell. Romantic writers represented childhood as a distinct period of life to be enjoyed and prolonged (Mintz 77) and depicted children as "symbols of purity, spontaneity, and emotional expressiveness, who were free from adult inhibitions" (Mintz 76). Further, because children were seen as morally pure, writers began

portraying them as moral and religious redeemers (Brewer 46). Cary's
fiction responds to this stereotype of the pure and angelic child
remarkably sympathetically, at least upon superficial examination. Very
seldom does Cary actually present a child with a disagreeable or evil
character. Most often children in Cary's fiction are oppressed by their
parents or guardians while the child quietly endures abuse or neglect as
is the case of Jenny ("Mrs. Wetherbe's Quilting Party"), James (*Married,
Not Mated*), Mark ("Uncle Christopher's"), and numerous others. Cary
also shows children who literally give up their lives and in death provide
salvation for the adults around them. Nanny's death in *Hagar, A Story
for Today* inspires Joseph Arnold to engage in a life of Christian service.
Similarly, Mark's death initiates Uncle Christopher into the world of
empathetic feeling. Despite this apparent acquiescence to Romantic
view of children as moral saviors or Christ-figures, Cary actually
questions both the need and effectiveness of such child sacrifices.
Unlike many of the sentimental writers of her time, rather than merely
presenting the Christ-like child, she emphasizes instead the moral debt
and blindness of adults that directly contributes to child death.

Although she does demonstrate in numerous stories that children
can and do die to provide redemptive examples of righteous behavior,
she also depicts children who die and whose deaths seem to serve no
redemptive value because the people around them refuse to change.

One such death is that of Nellie Furniss in *Married, Not Mated.* At the opening of the novel, Nellie and her older sister Annette appear living in Cincinnati with their ailing father. While Nellie is in her mid-teens at the brink of womanhood, Annette is nearly thirty years old (28), and appears desperate to escape their life of poverty and her own impending spinsterhood through marriage to Henry Graham, an upper middle-class farmer from whom the Furnisses purchase butter regularly. Upon the initial appearance of the two sisters, the reader can quickly discern the differences in the two girls' characters. As they sit down to breakfast with their father, Nellie takes great effort to set the table so that the cracked dinner ware conceals the patches and tears in the table cloth and disguises at least some of the family's poverty, and she patiently endures her father's scolding for using too much butter. In contrast, Annette insults her father without provocation and drives him from the room with tears in his eyes. In this initial interaction, Cary seems to be preparing the reader to interpret Nellie as a child-hero in the same way she presents Nanny in *Hagar.* Like Nanny, Nellie seems to be the lone worker in her household. Richard, the girls' father and whose hands are so shaky he can hardly hold his eating utensils, is hardly capable of physical labor—a fact that is eminently clear in Cary's description of the family's house which is covered in mold and falling apart. Annette on the other hand, simply refuses to work, stating that during her

childhood her parents worked her so hard that whatever good that was

within her has been warped from its original goodness (25). Not only

does Annette feel neither sympathy for her father nor guilt over her

actions, but she also allows her younger sister to shoulder the burden of

the household tasks, despite recognizing the fact that her sister is ill and

feverish. Annette even departs from her home for an extended visit to

Woodside, the estate of Henry Graham's family, and leaves her ailing

sister to tend their aging father and decrepit house by herself. As a

result, the strain of malnourishment and heavy housework allow Nellie's

illness to take root. Annette only returns to her home after she feels

that she has lost the affection of Henry, and upon her return, she learns

that her sister has died. Annette's grief upon viewing her sister's corpse

seems almost like a moment of true repentance. She tells Henry, "you

are very good . . . and I have been very blind and very bad; forgive me

that I have been so, and may God forgive me, too" (145). However, the

narrator reveals in this interchange that Annette still has not truly come

to repentance. She speaks to Henry coldly, "motioning him away with

the gesture of a superior (146), and though her grief seems genuine on

the surface, the narrator reveals that "though her bosom shook, her eyes

were dry" (145). Even when faced with her sister's sacrifice, Annette is

incapable of actual grief or humility. Therefore, as the novel progresses

she is incapable of human connection and feeling, and her inability to

love causes her to repeat the cycle of child sacrifice through her abusive neglect of her own children. While the expected model for children's deaths in nineteenth century sentimental literature is a model that uses a child's death to elicit repentance and redemption in the adults around them (Brewer 46), Nellie's death, while grieved by her family, does not really change anyone.

Married, Not Mated also presents another child whose death appears to serve no redemptive value for the other characters. James Graham, Henry's deformed nephew, dies under the cruel treatment of his grandmother, who refuses to acknowledge that the boy is actually more ill that she is. James's death seems to make very little impact on the world around him:

> THE funeral day was lonesome enough at Woodside; not that the poor little boy was much missed — how could he be? — but the coffin and the shroud, and the solemnity of burial, even when the meanest or the lowliest dies, leave mournful impressions on the hearts of all whom chance or necessity compels to see them. There was no regular funeral service; but the coffin was placed in the parlour, by the open window, and a "reverend good old man" read a chapter from the Bible and prayed fervently that, in the morning of the

resurrection, the crooked branch might be made straight.

(70)

The child's grandmother does not regard the child's death as an important enough event to warrant a formal observance. Instead of a eulogy the only words that are spoken in remembrance of the child is the mention of his physical deformity and the hope that it may in the afterlife be healed. No one commends James's life of service and self-sacrifice, and his grandmother, who benefitted the most from James's life does not even bother to attend. Instead, she stays in her room roasting potatoes. One of the few people in attendance at the burial comments that "the old woman did not take it hard at all" (71). The only character in the novel that seems touched by the child's death is his uncle Henry who already models the kind of selfless love and compassion that was embodied in James, but James's death appears to create the opposite of a redemptive effect in his uncle. After James's death (and Nellie's which follows closely afterward), Henry marries Annette and becomes despondent toward others and consumed by his work. In fact, Henry grows so melancholy after James's death that he does nothing to prevent the abusive neglect of his own infant son, whom he has named after his nephew. The closing chapter of the novel reveals Henry abandoning his children so that he may commit suicide in the family's garden pool because he feels that his brother has "forgotten"

him (252). His action leaves his two children sick and defenseless; the narrator's repeated references to the sickly countenance and unresponsiveness of his infant son also indicate that not only has Henry abandoned his children to suffer, but his abandonment also will result in the death of at least one of the children thus perpetuating the cycle of frontier deaths.

It may be argued that although the deaths of characters like James and Nellie appear to have no redemptive function, their child sacrifices elicit pity and empathy in the reader, and this emotional lesson for the reader is the redemptive function of the children's death. However, the deaths of these characters rather than bringing repentance and compassion to the world of the novel bring only more death and more destruction and feed a repeating cycle of child abuse, neglect, and death. In turn, this cycle of death indicates Cary's concern over a culture which does not always notice the mistreatment of children, or simply views the deaths of children as part of God's master plan for salvation. Unlike the deaths of children in other nineteenth century novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *Little Women*, novels that portray children dying from disease, many of Cary's child characters die as a direct result of abuse. While Little Eva's mother in Stowe's novel may not be particularly attentive to her child, she does not physically abuse the girl. Further, Eva experiences her death surrounded by loved ones and

dispenses words of love and spiritual guidance to the adults around her. In contrast, children like James die cold, alone, and almost unnoticed.

In addition to revealing the reality of childhood death and adult responses to it, Cary also shows the underside of the Romantic conception of childhood as a special period of life that needed protection and nurturance and that should be separated from realities of the adult world, and she reveals that these assumptions could actually endanger children through isolation and neglect. The nineteenth century saw a number of new cultural behaviors, child-centered industries, and technologies. Noting the importance of children's education, middle-class parents began creating nurseries in their home and stocking the rooms with a variety of children's furniture and toys (Mintz 76-77). Many modern people see the changes occurring in regard to child rearing practices that occurred during the nineteenth century as a marked improvement over earlier cultural practices and conceptions of childhood. However, Hillary Russell notes that this conception of childhood as a time that should be segregated from adult realities placed heavier demands on women during the nineteenth century than those placed on women in previous periods. There was more emphasis on the woman's ability as a housekeeper and educator of her children, while at the same time she had less help than her predecessors since children old enough to help watch younger siblings were going to school and

neighbors and servants were harder to come by (43). This increased

responsibility placed on mothers also led to a greater separation between

children and adult society. Children could be tucked away in nurseries

and cribs with little worry that they would suffer injury. The children

would also not prove a bother to the rest of their families, but they also

interacted with other generations much less than did their colonial

counterparts (Russell 41). Cary's account of the middle-class Graham

family in *Married, Not Mated* astutely portrays this separation between

child and parent. Annette hardly ever interacts with her two children,

who spend most of their time in their nursery or outside in the garden.

For Cary, this separation between mother and child embodies a neglect

that is dangerous and abusive. Nellie's attire and hygiene does not

correspond to that of her upper-middle-class family: she has "unkempt

hair, bare feet, and untidy garments," which are torn and ragged (273).

This neglect is also revealed in Annette's treatment of her sickly ten

month old son. Annette's behavior reflects what Russell suspects to be

an underlying reason for nineteenth century America's creation of

children's space:

> Not to be overlooked as a motivating factor [for placing
>
> children in nurseries] is that parents did not wish to be
>
> bothered by their children, and they could accomplish this

free of guilt, in an admittedly child-centered age, by . . .

constructing a special . . . world for the child. (41)

Instead of caring for the baby, Annette charges her daughter to keep

both herself and her brother "out of her sight" (272). The state of the

nursery attests to the depth of the mother's neglect of both children:

The nursery demanded our first admiration, and such a

collection of cheese crumbs, spoons, gingerbread, rattles,

cradles, broken chairs, and dishes, as were strewn over the

molasses-smeared carpet, I never expect to see again. In the

midst of all, brushing the flies from the face of the baby, sat

little Nellie (282-83).

While nurseries were ideally supposed to be safe, hygienic, child-

centered spaces (Russell 41), Cary reveals that the separation between

children and parents can result in a children's space dominated by the

behavior and abilities of children, which make the space neither safe nor

clean. The room is filthy, and the broken dishes and furniture

transform the nursery into a dangerous obstacle course, which Nellie

must navigate daily while carrying her brother who is almost as big as

she is. The environment in which these children are forced to live

resembles an environment of abject poverty. Annette's neglect is so

complete that she fails to notice that her son is seriously ill even when

confronted by the nearly unconscious child. Instead, she denies the

child's illness when she responds to Mrs. Perrin's concerned suggestion that the baby needs medicine:

> "No, he don't need medicine; he is always just so quiet."
>
> "I wish he wasn't, mother; I would rather he played, and was more trouble," . . .
>
> "And has he never more color?" inquired Mrs. Perrin, trying to kiss some into his cheeks.
>
> "I don't know; I have not noticed him lately," said the mother, lifting her eyes languidly, but evincing no new interest.
>
> "He don't seem to notice anything," Mrs. Perrin said, and laid the boy on the lap of his mother. He uttered a feeble and distressed cry, but she spoke not to quiet him, and with a little purposeless moving of one hand, as though it sought something, but without touching his mother's bosom, he stretched himself across her lap, clasped his white fingers together, and moaning to himself, fell asleep. (278-79)

The child displays all the symptoms of severe illness. He is pale, unresponsive, and moaning, but instead of caring for him herself, the mother hands the child to his sister. Annette is not the only person in

the family who neglects the children. After this encounter with her mother, Nellie brings her brother to her grandmother. The grandmother is too distracted by her three pet kittens to notice the baby's sickness (281). Even the pets rank higher than Nellie and her brother. The children are almost like alien intruders upon the life of their family and are simply brushed away by adults too busy with their own interests to meet the needs and desires of children.

Working Class Children—Orphans All

Cary also contradicts popular middle-class conceptions of working class children as morally corrupt orphans. The children of the working classes were not seen through the same interpretive lens as middle-class children. At the same time that the American middle-class began to conceive of their children as angelic, innocent beings, politicians, writers, and government officials held an overriding fear of working class children and "orphans"—a term that social leaders tended to apply to all poor children, regardless of whether the children's parents were alive or not (Lang 14-15). Such poor working class children were viewed as not only morally corrupt, but they were also seen as a threat to social order (Lang 15). In contrast, Cary's works portray working class children as some of the noblest characters in her fiction, and in the few accounts in which Cary presents morally tainted children, these children are always

from the middle-class or upper-class. In "The Charmed Money," Jerry, the working class child, embodies a mix of diligence, mercy, patience, gentleness, and loyalty. He even forgives and supports Henry and his mother even though Henry betrayed and publically humiliated him. Similarly, the longsuffering orphan, Jenny in "Mrs. Wetherbe's Quilting Party" highlights the monstrous behavior of her younger, middle-class adopted "brothers," who boss her around, throw things at her, and hit her.

Cary's most deliberate assessment of the troublesome orphan stereotype appears in the sketch "Peter Harris." Peter, like Jenny, is a poor orphan, and when he comes to the home of his aunt and uncle, his aunt, Mrs. Harris, believes that because the child is poor and lacks a formal education, he must be both stupid and immoral. Upon first meeting her nephew, she states that she and her husband are thankful "for the privilege of snatching him [Peter] like a brand from the burning" (*Clovernook, Second Series* 141). Mrs. Harris repeatedly refers to Peter as "my little heathen," but when she asks her own son teach Peter his evening prayers, Cary reveals the true state of affairs in the family:

> Calling her little son, who sat on the floor, sticking pins in
> the paws of her lap-dog, the lady told him to come and teach
> his poor little heathen cousin to say, "Now I lay me down to

sleep;" but the boy said he did not know it, and continued at his work of torment. (141-42)

Although Mrs. Harris thinks that Peter's ignorance of the prayer indicates a moral deficiency, her own son does not know the prayer either. Further, Cary reveals the cruel personality of Peter's cousin, who sits torturing a cat. Not only does the boy torture animals, but he also emotionally tortures people, as evidenced by his repeated taunts of Peter at the opening of the sketch. Cary's presentation of Peter and his cousins flatly refutes the stereotypes of the morally bankrupt and dangerous working-class child. In fact, Cary portrays that if any child is a dangerous influence on society, it is the spoiled middle-class child who has been pampered and doted on by its parents.

Childhood as a Metaphor for Race

One of the more striking features of Cary's fiction that first interested me was her surprising lack of racially marked characters. This lack of minority characters seemed particularly odd given that nearly all Cary's fiction is set in a region that is both part of the frontier and on a border between North and South. During Cary's childhood there were still a number of Native American tribes (including the Shawnee, Delaware, Ottawa, Wyandot, and Miami) on the Ohio frontier, and the final peace treaty between the "Ohio Indians" and the white

settlers was signed only a mere five years before Cary's birth (Hurt 343).

Not only would Cary have grown up hearing stories about past conflicts

between Natives and settlers, but encountering Native Americans would

not have been uncommon occurrence, since they conducted trade with

the whites in the area (Hurt 343). This lack of racial diversity in Cary's

fiction is particularly surprising since Cary grew up in Ohio near the

Ohio River and usually sets her works in that same region. According to

Keith Griffler, African American enclaves lived up and down the Ohio

River providing the "front-line" of freedom for the Underground Railroad

as they assisted escaped slaves cross the Ohio River and find shelter in

the North (1). James Tackach also notes that although Ohio was not

exactly a "Promised Land" for escaped slaves, the Underground Railroad

was extensive in Ohio, especially around Cincinnati (221). Cary's

contemporaries were also beginning to present more racially diverse

fiction. In addition to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* which famously

portrays escaped slaves interacting with the white community of Ohio,

there were other precedents for portrayal of racial diversity on the

frontier. Margaret Fuller includes a number of Native American

characters in *Summer on the Lakes,* her recollections of time she spent

travelling in the Great Lakes region, and during Cary's childhood, James

Fenimore Cooper, in works such as *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the*

Mohicans, was portraying racially and ethnically diverse frontier regions,

complete with Anglo-Americans, European immigrants, Native Americans, and slaves. Further, many of Cary's contemporaries and friends living in New York were ardent abolitionists, like Julia Ward Howe, or created racially diverse fiction, such as Melville's *Moby Dick* and *Benito Cereno*. However, Cary has only one sketch, one children's story, and one novel in which Native American characters actually appear. Her fiction also displays a similar dearth of African American characters. Cary never makes a single reference to the slavery system that was at the heart of so much political debate during her lifetime. She doesn't even have any major characters who could be considered as unquestionably African American. Instead, Cary carefully avoids such controversial representations and chooses instead to use racial coding and the metaphor of childhood to illuminate the issue of racial injustice.

<u>White, But Not White: Cary's Presentation of Slavery</u>

Cary's most important strategy in addressing racial issues and slavery is her use of racial coding to metaphorically present white children as slave figures. One such white slave appears in the sketch "Mrs. Wetherbe's Quilting Party." The sketch focuses on a teenage girl named Jenny, who is "adopted" as a small child by "Mrs. Randall," but the treatment Jenny receives is hardly that of a mother toward a daughter. It is the relationship of slave and master. Mrs. Randall tries to control all of Jenny's actions and makes her work ceaselessly in the

house, and she physically and emotionally abuses Jenny. Mrs. Randall

even permits her two young sons to hit and throw things at the girl.

Jenny's slave status is obvious in her lack of freedom, forced labor, and

physical abuse. Her status is further highlighted by her position in

comparison to the Randall's black house servant. The black woman

actually has more freedom that Jenny does because, unlike Jenny, the

servant is free to go home every night and, if she chooses, to find other

employment. When Jenny finally gains her freedom, she must do so

through flight and subterfuge. She gains the love of Mrs. Randall's

oldest son, Heath, and with the help of an older woman in the

neighborhood, the two escape together and get married. While Jenny's

mistreatment does allow Cary to comment upon the master/slave

relationship, Jenny's escape from slavery contrasts and highlights the

special difficulty that an African American slave would have in escaping

an abusive situation. Unlike a black slave, Jenny can escape the social

stigma and potential legal problems of interracial marriage, and since

Jenny is white, Heath would have been more inclined to marry her than

the typical slave owner may have been toward a black household slave.

While Cary uses her depiction of Jenny to expose the evils of

slavery but not specifically slavery in the South, she presents a racially

coded character in James the lame and abused grandson of Mrs.

Graham in *Married, Not Mated,* and in this depiction Cary offers a covert

abolitionist text. Although James is a member of the Graham family, he is, like Jenny, a slave figure. James is kept captive in his grandmother's room. He is only permitted to venture outside the house on rare occasions and is compelled by his grandmother's physical violence toward him to labor ceaselessly. Cary also reveals his slave status through a number of racially coded aspects. He, like the black slaves of the South, is physically marked. His limp and deformities mark him as different from the rest of the family and enable his grandmother to justify her treatment of him as less than human. In his death, James's slave status is further reinforced. Rachel, the house servant, notes that after his death, James turned "as black as coal." In his death, his body finally reveals the status to which his life had been relegated. This color change is key to Cary's underlying argument.

In order to reach a wider audience rather than merely those with abolitionist leanings, Cary chose to address the issue of slavery through metaphor in order to reach those who embraced racial beliefs and justified these beliefs through questionable Biblical interpretation. One popular theory used to justify the slave system was a biblical argument based on Genesis 9. According to Genesis, after the Great Flood, Noah's youngest son Ham found his father lying drunk and naked. Ham told his two brothers about the father, and they came to their father and covered him up while being careful to avoid looking at their father's

nakedness. Because of Ham's indiscretion, Noah curses Ham's son Canaan and states that he will be a servant of servants. The Bible then states that Ham migrated to the land of Cush and that his descendants populated that area. Early Jewish and Christian scholars traditionally interpreted the scene as Ham actually raping his father and then bragging about it to his brothers (Braude 34-35). By the nineteenth century, Southern Americans traditionally understood that Ham was the progenitor of the entire black race and that Ham's tendency for sexual sin and punishment of slavery was inherited by the black race. David M. Goldenberg claims that part of the linking between Ham and the black race was a translation error by early church fathers that incorrectly translated Kush as the word black (17). Thus, Ham was linked to the African continent, and his supposed descendants were condemned to slavery by the Bible. Historian Benjamin Braude also links this text to American justifications of the slave system. He explains that in the eighteenth century Augustin Calmet's Bible dictionary, which "became for the Bible what Webster's dictionary has been for the English language" (59), states that Ham, Canaan, and their descendants were cursed by Noah. According to Calmet, the curse burdened the father and son with slavery and turned their skin black. Calmet also claimed that all blacks were the descendants of Ham who was the "father of Ethiopia" (60). The effects of Calmet's writings were

widespread: "Duly translated and distributed, this matter of fact statement spread to pulpits far and wide from Paris to Oxford to Amsterdam and across the Atlantic to Boston, New York, and Atlanta (Braude 60). In the U.S. Calmet's writings were further elaborated upon strengthening the apparent Biblical justification for the institution of black slavery. By presenting only white slaves, Cary circumvents such "biblical" arguments for racism and slavery and attempts to reach readers who might have proved resistant to the true accounts of the horrors of slavery as recorded in slave narratives. For these readers, the moral character of the former slaves who wrote them would have come under scrutiny. After all, how could a descendant of Ham be trustworthy? However, by casting her slave figures as white, Cary's works use sentimental tropes to arouse sympathy for the oppressed characters, and in the case of James, his postmortem color transformation extends his mistreatment to the treatment of slaves in the South.

The enslavement of James and his subsequent blackness also exposes the artificiality of the black/white race dichotomy. James is a slave but not a slave, black but not a black. In fact, he is the blood relation of his master, just as many slaves in the South were actually the children or brothers of their masters. Cary's inclusion of James as an actual family member also points to her Universalist upbringing

which held that all people, including black slaves, were part of the "brotherhood of man." Bressler indicates that although there was a minority of pro-slavery Universalists in the South, the majority of Universalists believed that slavery was a sin against God who was the father of all humans (89). Cary's empathetic portrayal of James as a small abused child and family member to his white master emphasizes this Universalist ideal that all people were children of God and members of the same family deserving of rights, respect, and protection, but not necessarily equality. In using the metaphor of childhood to represent the injustice of slavery, Cary also infantilizes African Americans. Whether intentional or not, she indirectly affirms at least some of the more paternalistic defenses of slavery, like those of George Fitzhugh, who claimed that slaves could not survive without masters, since slavery provided guidance and protection to the enslaved (222-34).

<div align="center">Native American Children in the Forest</div>

Cary also uses a strategy of linking childhood and race in her story "A Relic of Ancient Days." While Cary's fiction does display other references to Native Americans, Willow-Flower of "A Relic of Ancient Days" is the only major Native American character in Cary's fiction. In the sketch, Uncle Dale, one of the founding members of the Clovernook community, reveals to the local children how he befriended a young Indian girl named Willow-Flower when he was a young man. Willow

Flower initially comes to spy on him and poison his watch dog. Uncle

Dale, realizing that the maiden and her tribe are planning to kill him,

goes to a town ten miles away to purchase two red scarves for Willow-

Flower. The night of his return Willow-Flower brings members of her to

rob and kill the pioneer. However, prepared with scarves and some wool

from his flock, Uncle Dale surprises the maiden by offering her gifts and

inviting her and her tribe members in to his house. The natives become

friends with Uncle Dale and give him gifts in return. On the surface,

Uncle Dale offers a simple story of how he used his wits to outsmart and

manipulate a Native tribe without violence. However, Dale describes

Willow-Flower and her tribe as if they are children. He refers to Willow-

Flower with the diminutive term "girl," and his story characterizes

Willow-Flower and her tribe as if they are children who are easily

impressed by cheap trinkets. Cary makes the comparison between the

Natives and children explicit in the final passage of the story:

> Many the stories, like this, told to children by the old men of
>
> the west. Where else and when, in all the various history of
>
> the world, have its forest-invading founders been suffered to
>
> see the meridian glories of a great empire, and in the midst
>
> of ancient-seeming states, to tell how the earliest seeds of
>
> civilization were there first planted by their own hands! It is
>
> as if the curious patrician had been suffered to drive along

> the Tiber from mightiest Rome's long streets of colonnaded
> palaces, to question the still living Silvia[3] of the traditions of
> kindness by Faustulus to her wolf-nursed children. (81-82,
> sic)

Cary compares Uncle Dale to Faustulus, the shepherd who, according to the ancient Romans, found the twins Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf in the forest. In this reference, Cary shows Uncle Dale as the planter of the first seeds of civilization, but she also characterizes Willow-Flower and her tribe as wild children in need of the civilized guidance provided by Uncle Dale. Just as Faustulus nurtures the twin boys so that they may grow to found the Roman Empire, so too does Uncle Dale educate the Indian girl and her tribe so that they may become part of the civilization offered by the budding American empire. Cary's approach to ending conflict with Native Americans is marked not by the violent eradication of Natives but rather the education and nurturance of Natives; but this paternalistic view is also self-serving because it casts the white "invaders of the forest" as morally, intellectually, and emotionally superior.

Cary's portrayal of children and childhood, like her presentation of womanhood and manhood, works both with and against the popular stereotypes of her time and is much more complex and nuanced than readers would typically guess upon first reading. This complex depiction

of childhood reveals the way in which stereotypes of children, even the more idealized and Romantic ideals have been used to oppress children. However, she also uses these same sympathetic, idealized portrayals of childhood not only to arouse sympathy on behalf of abused and oppressed children but she also presents these portrayals metaphorically to question, however tentatively, the mistreatment of other races. While Cary's depictions may not be completely without prejudice, she does attempt to act upon her Universalist beliefs to sympathize with and protect those as she views as defenseless, whether they are children facing physical abuse, mental abuse, and neglect; African Americans facing the physical horrors of slavery; or Native Americans facing eradication.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Cary's post-mortem decline into obscurity is, in some sense,
understandable. As a writer, she has not quite fit the molds expected of
"good writing." During her day she was a successful writer, by the turn
of the century she was all but forgotten, no doubt relegated to the status
of one of "mob of scribbling women"—a mob which included such
important writers as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Rebecca Harding Davis,
and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Showalter xxxv-xxxvi) and which had
"systematically been dismissed, scattered, [and] ignored" (Ammons ix).
Cary's work also resists the kind of criticism that has tended to
dominate contemporary studies – multi-author approaches that look for
dominant trends, social movements, or sweeping "traditions" within
American literature. Quite simply, Cary is, in the words of Fetterley and
Pryse, "eccentric" (102). However, this oddity is the very quality that
demands further attention from scholars.

Cary the Realist

Part of Cary's "oddity" is directly attributable to her realism, a trait
that does not allow her writings to be easily categorized with those of her
contemporaries. Cary wrote about the emerging American frontier at a

time dominated by expansionist propaganda and sentimental fiction, but her works give in to neither of these tendencies. While politically motivated writing and accounts by writers whom Cary labels "masters of literature" were busy presenting Ohio and other frontier regions as lands of wealth and ease, Cary reveals a frontier where families can find prosperity but they are also touched by early death, starvation, and poverty.   Cary's fiction displays a commitment to showing life as it was, as she had actually experienced it growing up in a farming class family on the frontier.

Similarly, Cary's realism differs from the sentimental tradition that dominated the literary marketplace. Nina Baym, in her book *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-70*, describes the typical sentimental plot:

> The story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she
> had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her
> throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning
> her own way in the world . . . . At the outset she takes
> herself very lightly--has no ego, or a damaged one, and looks
> to the world to coddle and protect her . . . .To some extent
> her expectations are reasonable--she thinks that her
> guardians will nurture her . . . But the failure of the world
> to satisfy either reasonable or unreasonable expectations

awakens the heroine to inner possibilities. By the novel's

end she has developed a strong conviction of her own worth

as a result of which she does ask much of herself. She can

meet her own demands, and, inevitably, the change in

herself has changed the world's attitude toward her, so

much that was formerly denied her now comes unsought.

(Baym 19)

In addition to these plot characteristics, sentimental novels tended to

end with marriage in which the heroine earns the love of a worthy man

or transforms an unworthy man into a man worthy of her love (Bayme

19). Granted, it is true that some of Cary's plots, especially those of her

novels, do bear similarities to the typical plot Baym delineates.

However, the outcomes of Cary's heroines differ sharply from the

outcomes typical in works by sentimental writers such as Susan Warner

or Maria Cummings. Unlike Ellen Montgomery of *The Wide,Wide World*

and Gerty of *The Lamplighter*, Hagar chooses a life of service rather than

marriage to an honorable man. Although Margaret of *The Bishop's Son*

chooses marriage, her marriage is an institution that saps her life and

vitality away, and in *Married, Not Mated* none of the central female

figures finds happiness. Nellie dies; Annette marries a worthy man, but

cannot find happiness or fulfillment in her marriage, and Orpha, the

narrator of the novel's second half, remains, as her name suggests, an orphan.

As I discuss in Chapter IV, Cary's treatment of children in her fiction also bears other resemblances to sentimental fiction. Cary, like her sentimental contemporaries does present Christ-like children, and she also uses language and events (such as the deaths of children) designed to emotionally manipulate the reader just as Stowe does with Little Eva. However, Cary's treatment of these characters and events differs from Stowe and other sentimental writers. For example, Stowe uses didactic language to coerce tears from her readership and presents Little Eva as preaching evangelical messages of Christ to the adults who surround her until the child sees Christ coming to take her to heaven:

> The child lay panting on her pillows, as one exhausted, -- the large clear eyes rolled up and fixed. Ah, what said those eyes, that spoke so much of heaven! Earth was past, -- and earthly pain; but so solemn, so mysterious, was the triumphant brightness of that face, that it checked even the sobs of sorrow. They pressed around her, in breathless stillness. . .
>
> "O, Eva, tell us what you see! What is it?" said her father.

> A bright, a glorious smile passed over her face, and
>
> she said, brokenly, -- "O! love, -- joy, -- peace!" gave one sigh
>
> and passed from death unto life! (428-429)

In contrast to this supernatural vision, most of Cary's child characters that die experience their deaths alone, like Mark, Uncle Christopher's grandson, who falls to the bottom of a well or James, the crippled grandson of Mrs. Graham in *Married, Not Mated*, who dies of exposure. Further, instead of relying on religious didactic images like the glowing face of Little Eva, Cary grounds her fiction much more in the natural rather than the supernatural and uses stark imagery like insects buzzing around children's faces or the cracked, bleeding, frost-bitten feet of a little boy to evoke sympathy from her readers. While Cary does share some of the emotional excess and language of the sentimental tradition, much of the power of her writing comes from such realistic descriptions and imagery. Further, her commitment to realistic description also makes her writing considerably more dark and somber than the fiction typical of her contemporaries. In this respect, Cary shares much more in common with the realists, who came to dominate American fiction after the Civil War, and many elements of her writing such as her use of vernacular language and dialog, concentration on ordinary people, and attention the commonplace details of life give rise to later realist movement. In fact, Cary can be viewed as a proto-realist.

Foremost of Cary's realist tendencies is her concentration on the mundane lives of common people. Later, this same characteristic would be heralded by William Dean Howells, in his December 1887 column "The Editor's Study," as the hallmark of realist writing:

> As we said, we hope the time is coming when not only the artist, but the common, average man, who always "has the standard of the arts in his power," will have also the courage to apply it, and will reject the ideal grasshopper wherever he finds it, in science, in literature, in art, because it is not "simple, natural, and honest," because it is not like a real grasshopper. But we will own that we think the time is yet far off, and that the people who have been brought up on the ideal grasshopper, the heroic grasshopper, the impassioned grasshopper, the self-devoted, adventureful, good old romantic card-board grasshopper, must die out before the simple, honest, and natural grasshopper can have a fair field. (85)

Through the analogy of the common or true grasshopper, Howells advocates the superiority of common people over the ideal, heroic, or romantic of characters in literature. Such praise for the common or ordinary character became common among late nineteenth century literary critics and writers, but nearly two decades before Howells wrote

his account of the grasshopper, Cary was espousing this same care for the common or "real" person over the heroic or ideal person. Although she presents many admirable characters, her fiction centers upon the lives of flawed characters. She also avoids the purely aristocratic or rich characters as well. While some of her characters are rich like Uncle Peter of *Married not Mated* or they have sensational lives like Elsie of *Hagar, A Story for Today*, most of Cary's central characters and plots simply involve farmers and their families as they go about their daily lives. They are not heroes engaging in extraordinary acts. For example, "About the Tompkinsons" is a sketch about a girl from a farming family who wants to attend a party at a wealthy neighbor's house and has nothing fancy enough to wear after she snags her new apron on a barrel, and the brief sketch "Mrs. Hill and Mrs. Troost" is the record of two women's conversation during afternoon tea, while "The Two Sisters" relates the rather unremarkable events of two girls walking home from school and feeling embarrassed about having no shoes. Even in works with more sensational plot elements, Cary devotes comparably little space to these elements. In *Hagar*, Cary's most sensational and gothic story—complete with an unwed mother, murderous preacher, idolatry, and infanticide—most of the novel's pages detail the daily events of the servants in the Wurth household or the mundane events in the lives of the Arnold family. Cary spends less than five pages describing all the

most shocking events of the novel. In this sense, Cary's fiction displays a penchant for hyper-realism since in comparison even to a realist writer like Twain, Cary's fiction is remarkably free of overt action and sensational occurrences. In fact, most of *Hagar* would seem "slow" or "boring" in comparison to *Huckleberry Finn*, a novel that has child abuse, murder, alcoholism, human trafficking, and cross-dressing.

Nonetheless, Cary's realism exists in a tension with the optimism of her Universalist themes. In her fiction, she criticizes injustice, satirizes self-involvement, and points toward the possibility of an ideal society where people may be free from the oppressive restraints of social expectations and stereotypes that pollute and corrupt human character, but she also reflects the realization that not all people submit to the parental authority of God and that societal corruption is a powerful force that often cannot be surmounted. This tension between idealism and realism seems to lead Cary's themes across the body of her fiction (and at times within individual works) to contradict themselves and create a feeling of unevenness in her writing – an unevenness that Cary herself even criticizes in her introduction to *Hagar*. However, this tension also makes her work interesting and complex. While the history of literary critics' attempts at defining and characterizing realism has been long and complicated, most literary critics still seem to accept the assumptions of mid-twentieth century critics like Everett Carter:

> The basic axiom of the realistic view of morality was that there could be no moralizing in the novel [. . .] The morality of the realists, then, was built upon what appears a paradox--morality with an abhorrence of moralizing. Their ethical beliefs called, first of all, for a rejection of a scheme of moral behavior imposed, from without, upon the characters of fiction and their actions. Yet Howells always claimed for his works a deep moral purpose. What was it? It was based upon three propositions: that life, social life as lived in the world Howells knew, was valuable, and was permeated with morality; that its continued health depended upon the use of human reason to overcome the anarchic selfishness of human passions; that an objective portrayal of human life, by art, will illustrate the superior value of social, civilized man, of human reason over animal passion and primitive ignorance. (157)

According to Carter, realism's heart was specifically opposed to outward influences like religion upon moral behavior, and as such, it was inherently secular in nature. While there has been some significant criticism examining the influence of religion on later nineteenth century realist writings, this assumption has gone generally unquestioned among literary critics in regard to antebellum realists, since the

emergence of realism has been characterized as a reaction against the overtly spiritualized, and at times didactic, writings of the romantics and sentimentalists. My study of Cary reveals that Christian faith and realism were not necessarily exclusive to one another during the antebellum period and that they could complicate both our critical understanding of the Christian writer and the foundations of American realism.

Cary the Feminist

In addition to her realism, Cary's feminism makes her work hard to classify. First wave feminist criticism examined the ways in which women were oppressed by male-dominated society and separate spheres philosophy, and second wave critics looked for ways in which women appropriated separate spheres language to empower women. Not surprisingly, Cary has been not readily embraced by feminist critics in either of these approaches. When critics use the separate spheres model to present women and women's writing as morally superior to male social patterns and literature, they either must ignore much of Cary's writings or simply exclude her from the feminist "traditions" that they see.

Although critics like Fick and Dobson, have tried to link Cary's works to the feminine "traditions" of "Republican Motherhood" and "True

Womanhood," Cary's fiction actually contradicts these themes. Cary

presents her female characters, especially mothers, as just as likely to

be selfish and self-centered as the male characters in her stories. Just a

cursory glance at Cary's female characters reveals they harbor all kinds

of malevolence. Aunt Rachel of "Uncle Christopher" stands in silence

allowing her husband to abuse her grandson. In *Married Not Mated,*

Mrs. Graham shows blatant favoritism between her two sons and

physically abuses her grandson, while Annette Graham severely neglects

her infant son. Eunice Wurth of *Hagar* is every bit the archetype of the

evil step-mother, and in *The Bishop's Son,* Mrs. Fairfax uses scheming

and manipulation to try to steal Samuel Dale's affection from her own

daughter, Margaret. Cary's fiction is full of such "evil" women. In fact,

the evil women in Cary's fiction nearly overshadow the evil male

characters, especially in her longer works. Aunt Rachel, far from being

a victim in "Uncle Christopher's," enables her husband's abusive

behavior toward their grandson, and Annette and Mrs. Graham's self-

centeredness in *Married, Not Mated* overshadows that of Uncle Peter's

since the women's victims are defenseless children rather than other

adults, who may choose to disobey. Even in *Hagar*, where Cary presents

a minister who debauches a virgin and commits infanticide, Eunice

Wurth's evil character dominates the narrative in terms of pages devoted

to their respective actions.

Such depictions appear to make Cary's fiction to border on misogyny, yet Cary is a distinctive type of feminist that can really only be understood when one examines her work in terms of its religious significance. Early Universalist Judith Sargent Murray, who helped her husband John Murray establish the Universalist Church in the United States, held that women were the mental equals of men and should be educated as such or else they would find negative outlets for their mental energies. Although Cary never wrote an essay specifically discussing the potential of women or the oppression that they faced, her feminism has much in common with this Universalist feminism. Like the Universalists before her, Cary claims that women are capable of anything a man is, for good or ill. However, Cary takes her feminist critique a step further in questioning the general perception of women's "innate" goodness, and she exposes the complex relationship between domestic life and class difference. Cary, unlike her many predecessors, de-essentializes women's experiences. She does not present women's lives as inherently the same across class, regional, and racial boundaries and she reveals that even the oppressed can hold the power to oppress others. Thus, she reveals Universalist tenants that all people fall short of their potential outside of the grace of God and that it is only through holiness and the practice of good works that that people can find happiness (Holifield 227).

Cary as a Christian Writer

Cary's Christianity further distances her from other female writers of her time. Although, as Jane Tompkins reveals, American sentimental writers typically espoused a broadly Christian world view with females being the purveyors of Christ's salvation, Cary's Christianity was of a different sort than that practiced by writers like Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Tracy Fessenden notes that during the nineteenth century, the general conception of Christianity came to be recognized in increasingly narrow terms: quite simply, a single version of middle-class Protestantism, a branch that was increasingly evangelical in its practices, became able to "render itself unspoken," to be considered "normative" (88). Fessenden also charges that literary criticism, particularly gender criticism, has perpetuated the myth of a monolithic Christian identity to the exclusion of non-Protestant branches and sects:

> In the same way, scholars who highlight the importance of religion to the formation of the middle class, and its expression in gender arrangements and other social forms encoded in nineteenth-century texts, have tended by omission to endorse the particular religious culture such texts often tirelessly promote over and against competing alternatives. Tompkins, for example, notes the

"monumental effort" undertaken by white evangelical

Protestants within the emerging North Atlantic middle class

to "convert the entire nation and eventually the entire world

to the truths of Protestant Christianity." Even so, she

characterizes this movement—a quite specific cultural

campaign with obvious designs on lands west and south, on

slaves and free blacks, on native peoples, Catholics,

Mormons, and immigrants—simply as "Christian" and as

representing "the nation's most cherished religious beliefs."

(89)

Although critics like Tomkins generalize evangelical Protestantism as

being synonymous with the term *Christian*, Christian identity and beliefs

during the nineteenth century were far more diverse and varied. Cary's

faith is an example of a Christian sect that has been rendered largely

invisible within the term Christianity. Universalists were a distinct

denomination that did not conform to the monolithic presentation of

Christian identity put forward by nineteenth century evangelical writers.

Universalists faced persecution from evangelical Protestants and

were held up to public derision. Evangelicals publically denounced

Universalists as promoting immorality and being irrational (Holifield

223). Some evangelical protestants even went so far as to state that

Universalists were not Christians. Even the government, which was

controlled to a large extent by the evangelical majority, participated in the harassment of Universalists; during the early years of the Universalist movement, weddings performed by Universalist pastors were not even recognized by law (Holifield 227).

Part of this derision for Universalism could have been the result of doctrinal differences. While evangelicals believed in an everlasting hell as a place of punishment for those who refused to accept Christ's sacrifice, Universalists did not believe in an eternal punishment. However, this doctrinal difference is not as big as it may seem on the surface. Most Universalists believed, like the evangelicals, in the triune nature of God, the saving power of Christ's death on the cross, God's creatorship and sovereign nature, God's grace, and that humans were saved from hell by faith in Christ's sacrifice. The only major difference in Universalists' beliefs was the timetable that humans had in which to "repent" of their sins. While evangelicals staunchly held that a person must confess Christ before death in order to receive salvation, most Universalists believed that people who died before being redeemed would face a limited period of punishment aimed at disciplining the soul so that it would turn to God in repentance and be saved (Holifield 220-27). Perhaps, the underlying reason for the exclusion of Universalists, and indeed other versions of Christianity, lies in its origins and teachings. Universalism originated among the working class and most of its

congregants were working class people (a fact that probably contributed

to Cary's concern with the working class in her writing), while

evangelical protestants tended to be rooted in the middle-class and its

moral perceptions. Universalism represented a threat to social order,

just as Catholicism, practiced mainly by recently arrived immigrants

presented a threat to established power structures. Susan M. Griffin

relates that America had a long history of Anti-catholic rhetoric, but

during the nineteenth century, these sentiments were "revivified" as

waves of new immigrants arriving from Italy, Germany, Spain, and, most

notably, Ireland began to integrate into the U.S. culture. This wave of

immigration was so large, in fact, that by 1850 Catholicism became "the

single largest denomination in the country" (3). This massive perceived

invasion threatened the domination of the Anglo-American middle class

and fueled anti-catholic rhetoric. Anti-catholic writers presented

Catholicism as a religion that was without a nationality and which

threatened the very nationhood of the U.S. and exposed it to Vatican

control (Griffin 4). Thus the threat of Catholicism was not merely a

threat of religious influence; rather, it was also a political threat to the

established order and power structure of the white, middle-class Anglo

society. Similarly, Universalism, though not as wide-spread as

Catholicism, not only threatened the religious influence of evangelicals,

it also presented an ideological threat to the social order which kept the

working class in the service of the middle-class and largely politically silent. Such fears are evident in many of the evangelical complaints which disparaged Universalist services for allowing any person, regardless of gender, education, or class to speak at meetings. Further, through its association with writers like Judith Sargent Murray and the *Ladies Repository*, Universalism was also tied to the early women's rights movement, which threatened the male dominated social order (Bressler 92). In keeping with her Universalist origins, Cary's fiction often expresses distain of the middle-class and its religious values. Some of her most threatening figures come in the guise of evangelical ministers. Her writings do not reinforce the dominant ideologies but rather they threaten the dominance of evangelical Protestantism.

I believe that this study illuminates a great need to explore the question of Christian writing and how it is defined and perceived. Cary's fiction greatly complicates the way we understand both terms. In the mid-1990's Jenny Franchot questioned American literary critics' reluctance to investigate religion and challenged scholars to research the issue of religion rather than merely relegating it to a tool for exploring other "more important" issues such as gender (834), but according to Fessenden literary critics have done little since Franchot's challenge to investigate religion as a serious topic for inquiry. In fact, Fessenden claims that while recent critics have investigated the way in which

gender is complicated by other social factors, religion is still largely ignored by literary critics (89). My exploration of Cary's fiction also demonstrates the ways in which religion works as a powerful force in its own right to complicate other social categories such as race, gender, region, and class. American literary criticism clearly could benefit from a deeper exploration and understanding of Christianity and other religious faiths.

Other Areas of Exploration in Cary

This study of Cary reveals her to be a more complicated and nuanced writer than she has been previously assumed and is an important first step in understanding Cary as an important and influential nineteenth century writer. Unlike other scholars, I have endeavored to create the first comprehensive look at all of Cary's fiction, including her novels, rather than just her sketches. Aside from Wendy Ripley, I am the only critic to recognize Cary's novels as an important aspect of her fiction, and even Ripley's examination of *Hagar* and *Married, Not Mated* is scarcely more than a cursory summary of each novel (86-90). Further, no Cary critic has ever even mentioned Cary's children's fiction and how this genre contributes to her body of fiction as a whole. My hope is that in addition to demonstrating the importance of Cary's entire body of fiction, my study of Cary will illustrate the

importance of doing more comprehensive studies of multi-genre writers,
particularly female writers, who have been studied only in respect to a
single genre in the way that Cary research has been dominated by
concern with the sketch form.   Despite my attempt at a comprehensive
study of Cary's fiction, my study is in no way exhaustive.   Given the
limitations of this dissertation, there is much more material to discover
in regard to Cary's contribution to American Literature.

Foremost of these is a critical biography. Currently, Ames's
biography is the only published biography of Cary, and the accuracy of
this document is subject to scrutiny and does not really address her as
a writer as much as it does as a public woman.   A cursory examination
of what is actually known about Cary's life is limited and indicates that
scholars have much to learn in regard to Cary's artistic influences and
her possible influences on other writers. This latter concern is especially
important considering her wide circle of literary and political friends and
her presidency of Sorosis. Granted, the future biographer can expect to
find some difficulty with this task. Currently, the largest collection of
Cary's manuscripts and letters lies at the University of Virginia, and it is
housed in just two small cardboard boxes. A few letters from Alice Cary
to William Cullen Bryant can be found in the New York Public Library,
and the proceedings of Sorosis are housed by Smith College in
Northampton, MA. The scarcity of Cary manuscripts appears to exist

because Cary advised her friends and family to burn her letters after reading them. Further, Cary's handwriting in her later letters during her illness borders on incomprehensible. Despite these challenges, I believe that a biographer would find Cary a worthwhile subject. Researchers should be able to find references to Cary in newspapers contemporary to her time and in special collections holding the manuscripts of Cary's friends and fellow universalists Horace Greely and P.T. Barnum, as well as the manuscript collections of professional associates such as Rufus Griswold, John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and even Susan B. Anthony, who is mentioned in some of Cary's letters housed at the University of Virginia. I believe that such a study of Cary may find that she was far more influential than previously imagined.

Cary's poetry is also a critical area of study that needs to be expanded. For the purpose of this study, I focused on Cary's fiction, in order to build upon the foundation that has been laid by critics such as Fetterley, Pryse, and Schulz who all focus on Cary's sketches. This study has expanded that focus to all of Cary's fiction including both her novels and her children's stories. However, during her lifetime, Cary was recognized primarily as a poet rather than a fiction writer. Critics need to seriously engage Cary's poetry and to investigate its social significance, including the question of its popularity.

Cary's work is also in need of more thorough sociological criticism. Since this dissertation focuses on domesticity and religion, it only touches on a number of sociological issues that deserve deeper exploration. For example, no critic has yet fully explored the complex manner in which Cary presents class differences and oppression. Similar to her depiction of gender, Cary appears to complicate class beyond a simple Marxist dichotomy of proletariat and bourgeois. The work of Schultz, Fetterley, and Pryse has already begun this process by examining the way in which family dynamics mimic larger social dynamics in Cary's fiction. In addition, Cary presents her frontier as a place with many gradations of class and demonstrates not only how the poor are oppressed but also how the oppressed often oppress others less fortunate than themselves and how the oppressed are often parties to their own oppression.

Further, as a frontier writer, Cary's work divulges a concern with imperialism and manifest destiny, but her attitude toward the frontier is one of ambivalence. While her writing displays paternalistic attitudes toward Native Americans and, at least on the surface, appears to advocate the westward movement of pioneer families, she paints the frontier as a life of hardship and death, and unlike other pioneer authors such as Cooper, she does not present her pioneers as overly heroic. The advancement of civilization in Cary's work appears to be

merely a steady movement westward neither good nor evil in itself. Part of what complicates this vision of the frontier is Cary's attitude toward the westward movement of industrialization. Kolodny notes Cary's criticism of this industrialization. While in Cary's first collection of *Clovernook* tales, Cary presents her childhood home as the wilderness it was during her early years, the second series of *Clovernook* tales reveals the region as it was in her adulthood, and in the second series Cary's description of the region is less complimentary that that of the earlier collection. Cary describes dark smoke stacks rising into the skyline of Louisville and Cincinnati and the pig sties that come to replace yards in the region. Instead of bringing or improving civilization, industrialization in Cary's works seem to destroy it, and although Cary does not appear to disapprove of families moving into the wilderness and creating communities, she does critique the advancement of technology and mechanization that seems to inevitably arise from this movement westward. Clearly, this relationship between industrialization and the frontier is complex and needs more space than I can devote here, but these conflicting concerns make Cary an ideal subject for an eco-critical approach.

Whatever aspect a critic chooses to study there seems to be ample material for investigation. Cary stands a prime example of an author who has been overlooked and whose obscurity has hindered the

construction of literary history, particularly in regard to the antebellum roots of realism and the influence of liberal religious belief in the establishment of the movement. As an important nineteenth century writer, Cary's influence on American literature and culture is only beginning to be understood.

NOTES

[1] In her criticism of regionalist writers, Fetterley later went on to include Cary as the inaugural writer in what she viewed as a strictly feminist tradition of writing, but while Fetterley in her work with Pryse, claims that Cary is the "first regionalist," she also classifies Cary as "strange" or an "oddity" and pays very little overall attention to Cary's work in comparison to her exploration of other regionalists who wrote during the post-bellum period.

[2] Michael Kimmel in his book *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* purports to have written the first history of masculinity in America. While David Leverenze's account of manhood in *Manhood and the American Renaissance* and E. Anthony Rotundo's book *American Manhood*, predate Kimmel, Kimmel's study is the most comprehensive study of manhood in America and has been well-reviewed and cited by over a hundred scholars of literature, history, and sociology.

[3] According to Roman mythology Silvia's father was king of Alba, when her uncle killed her father and forced her to become a Vestal Virgin, a priestess to the goddess Vesta. Mars, the god of war saw the priestess and, overcome with lust, raped her. She gave birth to the twins Romulus and Remus, and her uncle ordered that she be imprisoned and her sons taken to the river and drowned, but a she wolf saved the twins.

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