“It was delightful to be so hungry”: Food, Class and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

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Abstract

This thesis explores the social, political, and spatial extensions of food and eating in nineteenth-century young women's coming-of-age texts in America. It focuses on novels and short-stories from women authors such as Louisa May Alcott, Susan Coolidge, Eleanor H. Porter, and Sarah Jewett in order to unpack both young women's and young men's complex relationships to food while examining the culture that shapes restrained, social eaters. This research is grounded in textual representations of the complex framework of nineteenth-century girls and young women in the kitchen, along with boys and young men in domestic eating spaces, while engaging with the social and political significance of the spaces in which these characters eat and cook.

Chapter One discusses the ways in which boys in Alcott's *Under the Lilacs* and *Little Women* series, along with Dorry in Coolidge's *What Katy Did*, struggle to adopt appropriate relationships to food and their appetites—relationships that guide them into successful futures as ideally masculine men. Throughout these texts—novels targeted toward girls and young women in the nineteenth century—young male characters struggle to negotiate their identities as enthusiastic eaters of female-prepared food with social pressures to develop into hardworking, masculine men in control of their appetites.

The second half of this thesis hinges on arguments of the history of space, and the ways in which food is deeply intertwined with architectural shifts in domestic spaces. Chapter Two primarily looks at Eleanor H. Porter's 1913 novel, *Pollyanna*, and discusses Pollyanna's ability to develop cross-class relationships with lower-class female characters in the text while using food and eating spaces as a means of transcending class boundaries.

The third and final chapter continues exploring themes of space, as it analyzes the ways

in which the kitchen becomes an increasingly feminized space in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It looks at the ways in which by creating spaces of collective cooking and food sharing, these authors transcend the boundaries of the feminized cooking space and reject social rituals that isolate women in the kitchen.

This thesis is dedicated to my husband,

Carson Sherwick, whose love I have cherished

since I, myself, was a little woman.

Over the past eight years we have learned that

“life and love are very precious when both are in full bloom”

-Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Roxanne Harde, for her guidance, support, and friendship throughout this process. Since the earliest stages of my academic career, she has encouraged me to reach my highest potential and has planted in me a passion for research that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I owe much of my success to Dr. Harde's unwavering support and the incredible example she sets as a teacher and as a researcher.

Many thanks to my committee members, Dr. Nat Hurley, Dr. Ingrid Johnston, and Dr. Peter Sinnema, for their encouraging and thoughtful comments throughout the process of my defense. Dr. Hurley's comments on my thesis as a second reader were invaluable, and helped me shape this document into a cohesive piece.

The Social Sciences-Humanities Research Council has generously provided indispensible financial support, without which this project would have been impossible. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Harde, Dr. Paul Harland, and Dr. Sinnema, along with my fellow students in the SSHRC proposal workshops, for their helpful comments and feedback in the proposal-writing process. Thank you to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Alberta, also, for providing me with the W. H. Johns Graduate Fellowship to aid with tuition costs and other expenses.

Thank you to Ashley Valberg, who has been my best friend and study partner since the first day of our respective undergraduate programs. We grew into scholars together, and I could not have made it through the past six years without our long talks, late nights, and genuine support for one another.

I am deeply grateful to my family for their enduring support throughout this process. My husband, Carson Sherwick, has remained a beacon of strength through the highs and lows of completing the Master's program, both the coursework and the thesis-writing process. Completing a Master's thesis during my first pregnancy has been the most challenging experience of my life thus far, and Carson continues to encourage me to achieve my academic goals while remaining a loving and caring partner. I am proud of the example he is setting for our daughter. I am also incredibly thankful for my parents, Bryne and Ellen Christensen, for their encouragement in my graduate studies. Since childhood they have instilled in me a love of learning that will continue to inform my future endeavors. My Grandmother, Freda Hird, has kept me connected to a long line of women cooks in our family, and she has been the center of my most beloved childhood memories in the kitchen. Finally, thank you to my mother-in-law, Valerie Schaning, and my sister-in-law Shelby Sherwick. Your support has been such an important part of both my undergraduate and graduate accomplishments, and your incredible talents in the kitchen, along with the love you create through food, continue to astound me.

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Introduction

"More than energy and good will is necessary to make a cook":

Shaping the Nineteenth-Century Cook and Eater

In "Amy's Valley of Humiliation," the eighth chapter of Louisa May Alcott's best-selling children's novel, *Little Women* (1868-69), Amy, the youngest of the March sisters, is mortified after her teacher discovers that she is hiding pickled limes in her desk and she is punished for possessing the contraband. She explains to her sisters the necessity of possessing this treasured food in order to establish a comfortable niche in the social hierarchy of her school, and Meg asks, "Are limes the fashion now?" (69). In this moment, as Amy designates limes as a fashionable commodity among her schoolmates, food functions as a determinant and perpetuator of social classification and acceptance. When Amy is caught with the "twenty-four delicious [pickled] limes," her teacher summons her to the front of the classroom, and as he "particularly detested the odor of the fashionable pickle," he orders her to toss them out the window (72). The loss of the coveted limes is enough to strike utter disappointment in the hearts of Amy and her peers, but as the limes "fell from her reluctant hands, a shout from the street completed the anguish of the girls, for it told them that their feast was being exulted over by the little Irish children, who were their sworn foes" (72). Amy is not devastated simply by the loss of her limes—the vehicle through which she is elevated in her socially stratified girls' community—but also by the idea of the Irish street children, the poor, devouring her prized limes, the food of the rich.

My thesis works to unpack both young women's and young men's complex relationships to food in these texts while examining the culture that shapes restrained, social eaters. This work

begins with young women's relationships to food and their entrenchment in the domestic sphere as preparers and servers of food; it starts with the means by which what Jewett calls female "little cooks" are shaped into marriageable women through constrained appetites and self-sacrificing relationships to food (Jewett 571). Grounding my research in textual representations of the complex framework of nineteenth-century girls and young women in the kitchen, I explore deeper issues of gender, class, and space in contexts of food in these texts. If fashionable food, such as pickled limes, functions as a vehicles of power in the social hierarchy at the all-girls'-school, what social roles does food take on in the lives of young boys? In a culture where women are designated preparers of meals and men are designated eaters, in what ways are boys' and young men's appetites influenced by conventions of masculinity? If food is embedded in issues of class and social hierarchy, in what ways can food function as a means of mobility between the upper and lower classes—the servants and the served—and how does food operate in intersectionalities of gender and class? Furthermore, as single-room communal living spaces assert cooking as a more liberatory, genderless activity, how do designated cooking and eating spaces work to banish food preparation as strictly feminine labour?

Despite the pervasiveness of eating and sharing food in literature, especially beginning in the nineteenth century, food is a relatively new subject of literary scholarship. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s food became a prominent field in the social sciences, and with the publication of works such as *Cooking Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* by Jack Goody, foodways and food histories began to gain momentum in anthropology, sociology, and eventually the humanities (Keeling and Pollard 6-7). Food takes on a complicated role in literature—it is a ubiquitous and crucial component to human existence, yet rituals of choosing, preparing, and sharing food are embedded in cultural and social structures. In their introduction

to *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard offer a prolific review of food scholarship and literature emerging throughout the past century, and while they illustrate that the vast majority of explorations of food in literature has been dedicated to literature for adults, "so too is [food studies] becoming important in the field of children's literature" (10). The essays in Keeling and Pollard's collection explore children's texts from various periods and areas, including Rudyard Kipling's narratives of Imperial boys, Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants series, and Irish Famine literature for children, and they offer vast analyses of food in children's texts against a variety of cultural backdrops. While food studies in the field of children's literature does continue to grow, there is a considerable lack of scholarship pertaining to preparing, serving, and sharing food in nineteenth-century American literature for young people.

As my title suggests, my exploration of food in these texts is embedded in matters of class and gender in the nineteenth century, but I do not take on these issues as neatly separated social domains. Throughout my thesis, I recognize the intersectionalities of class and gender and resist the type of compartmentalism that attempts to divide the two and analyze them as two distinct social phenomena, functioning alongside yet separate from one another. Instead, I consider a feminist materialism that acknowledges the notion that gender works on a level of class struggle and, as Christine Delphy suggests, "[i]t is one of the fields of confrontation of two groups; but the groups are not the proletarians and the capitalists, but social men and social women" (63). I do not examine the young women in these texts strictly *as* young women, but as women functioning in a class hierarchy—similarly, I do not attempt to attune the experiences of boys and girls in similar class positions. As Susan Bordo points out, "gender never exhibits itself in pure form but always in the context of lives that are shaped by a multiplicity of influences,

which cannot be neatly sorted out and which are rarely experienced as discrete and isolatable" (238). Exploring issues of class and gender in these nineteenth-century children's texts is not a task that can be divided into strict and respective ideologies of class and gender, but rather, in the words of Bordo, it is necessary to "adjust one's methodological tools so that gender commonalities cutting across differences become indiscernible under the finely meshed grid of various interpretations and inflections" (238). In the context of my research in nineteenth-century American children's literature, class and gender exist interconnectedly, and I consider what Nancy Hartsock coins as a feminist standpoint in historical materialism. Hartsock takes issue with the male-centeredness of historical materialism—as it takes on issues of class and inequality in Western social structure, it ignores issues of gender inequality. She argues, "what seem on the surface voluntary interactions between equal participants are in reality deeply and structurally unequal. We need to begin again to construct a theory of women's oppression and exploitation which is both materialist and historical" (150). She resists the type of historical materialism that simply acknowledges gender difference as a "given," and pushes for a feminist standpoint from which to analyze class in Western society. The nineteenth-century children's texts I analyze in this thesis inextricably weave issues of class, gender, and food, and while I do employ a standpoint theory that calls for the exploration of these texts through a feminist lens, these texts also demand a consideration of Marxist theory and historical materialism. In the following chapters, I explore the intersectionalities between class and gender, with a particular focus on the ways in which food functions as a means of teasing out the meanings of these experiences. Despite the fact that the majority of boys and girls in these stories belong to the upper-middle class, their experiences shift based on their respective genders—boys are trained to eat while girls are trained to cook. Rather than analyzing these experiences as aspects of separate social

phenomena, I recognize class and gender as messily interwoven, and analyze the ways in which food "cuts across" difference and creates relationships and experiences entrenched in class and gender.

As I explore issues of food and eating as extensions of nineteenth-century American social structures and constructions of gender, I keep in mind the complex nineteenth-century American class system through which food operates in these texts. Even as it instates the female as the provider of food, Amy's incident with the pickled limes in *Little Women* reminds the reader of the differences between the food of the rich and the food of the poor, and the class implications at work when this divisions are undermined. In the nineteenth century, American society worked against the notion of the gulf between the stratified "upper" and "lower" classes, and instead attempted to view the differences between the rich and the poor with fluidity. In his series of political articles published in the *North American Review* in 1851, Francis Bowen argues that in his contemporary American society, "the language of class [does] not define a field of conflict where opposed interests would inevitably find expression in the political arena, or in the streets," but rather he suggests that class in America existed loosely, merely as a means of providing "neutral terms of official social description" (qtd. in Lang 1). Discourses of class in mid to late nineteenth-century America resisted the concept of a strictly divided hierarchal class system, as republican America worked to distance itself from the volatile European class system. However, as the Industrial Revolution progressed in America, unequal distributions of wealth had undoubtedly created a "high" and "low" class, and the gulf between the rich and the poor was becoming more and more noticeable, particular in urban settings (Lang 2-3). In her work on class inequality in nineteenth-century America, Amy Schrager Lang notes,

> In a social world routinely, if sensationally, represented as divided between

> "millions" and "mills," "fashion" and "famine," or, in Lydia Maria Child's words, "magnificence and mud, finery and filth, diamonds and dirt," the failures of traditional modes of social description to accommodate new social and economic relationships heightened public awareness of class difference. (3)

As the middle class began to emerge in the mid-late nineteenth century and the upper class began to grow at an astonishing rate,[1] the lower class also grew, and the visible presence of homeless individuals in the streets—particularly children—sparked anxiety in America (Lang 3). Attempts to subvert American culture from the grasps of the stratified European class hierarchy had failed, yet, as Lang suggests, "[t]o publicly admit the reality of class in America was to open the nation to the threat of class conflict" (2). Just as it offered a space of delight and imagination, children's literature emerging in the period worked to propel the lower class into the middle by encouraging young male readers to take on industrial work ethic, while promoting domestic values and skills in young female readers. The authors whose texts I examine praise the middle-class woman labouring happily in the kitchen as she sets aside her own appetite—not only for food, but also her sexual appetite—in the name of her family, and the controlled middle-class man who returns to the household hungry after working outside of the home. Issues of food and its implications in the nineteenth-century American class system arise throughout this thesis, as these children's texts work to posit the middle-class home—with its enthusiastic young women in the kitchen—as the antithesis of and cure for the struggling poor.

Mark McWilliams's study of food in the nineteenth century novel explores narratives of food in novels by authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorn, Herman Melville, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, and focuses on the tensions arising between nineteenth-century American society's

[1] In 1860, more than half of the nation's wealth belonged to only 5% of the population, rather like today (Lang 2).

fascination with European cuisine and the push toward maintaining "republican simplicity" (xiii). He notes that in the nineteenth century, "Americans relied on novelists and other social commentators to help them refine their understandings of behavior in the kitchen and at the table" (McWilliams xii). While contemporary American culture is steeped in food media—he particularly looks at the immense popularity of the food network and their celebrity chefs—nineteenth-century Americans were also immersed in food commentary as food narratives, commentary, and cookbooks became more and more prominent in the culture (McWilliams xii). While McWilliams does address issues of food as an extension of American class structure, he focuses primarily on nineteenth-century literature for adults—both antebellum and post-bellum. His final chapter, "Eating Nostalgia," explores Alcott's deeply-entrenched longing for the "old-fashioned" ways of cooking, serving, and sharing meals—an issue that I take on in my third chapter—as he examines the healing powers of "country cookery" in Alcott's 1873 novel for adults, *Work*. McWilliams suggests that in the late nineteenth century, "given the new role of the home as a site of entertaining, the nostalgia seen in the slogan for the 1890s magazine *The Housewife*, 'echoes old-fashioned sentiment at a time when the housewife's role was in question and the home was no longer considered a safe haven from the outside world" (Plante qtd. in McWilliams 156). Alcott's domestic stories emerge at a time when extravagant dinner parties and social expectations were beginning to open up the household into a more public space and displace the labouring housewife from the safety of the familial private sphere to a more public, social eating space. Through her nostalgic, old-fashioned narratives, Alcott rejects the increasingly heavy reliance on cooking staff and young women's reluctance to labour in the kitchen and idealizes the image of the hardworking matriarch—along with her daughters—nurturing her family within the confines of the kitchen. My argument deviates from that of

McWilliams, though, as I focus on the significance of the collective female cooking space and the ways in which the communal food space shifts gender politics within the home. Particularly in this introductory section of my thesis, I focus heavily on Alcott's fiction for children. Her prolific output and her concern with the domestic—especially issues of food in the domestic—situate her as the most prominent author in my research, and while I do explore texts from other influential authors in the period, Alcott remains essential throughout this thesis.

Holly Blackford also examines themes of women in the kitchen in Alcott's work, particularly in *Little Women*, but rather than focusing on Alcott's nostalgia for "republican simplicity," she looks at the ways in which cooking becomes an outlet for suppressed female desire and functions as a means of empowerment in these nineteenth-century texts. Blackford argues that "[f]oodchains of power are constructed and expressed by activities of food consumption and production. In women's writing for girls on the threshold of womanhood, food is not as much a heterosexual matter as it is an intergenerational matter between mothers and daughters" (41-42). She is particularly interested in the mother-daughter relationships at the center of kitchen labour, and suggests that while cooking and serving meals for hungry husbands and voracious (male) children does require suppression of the self, it also functions as a vehicle of female power. Cooking thus can become an outlet for repressed female desire:

> Food lies at the center of socialization rituals for children, and in girls' novels young female protagonists are often apprenticed to mother figures that are engaged in cooking activities. Such novels typically emphasize cooking at the expense of eating, partaking in the politics by which girls learn to curtail their own desires and sacrifice for others. Cooking is a form of self-control and a way to prepare the female character for repressing inner needs, packaging the self and

> female body for the pleasure of others. However, cooking is also an aesthetic expression of the female self, a subtle expression of female desire that can take on a life of its own. (42)

Blackford keeps in mind this expression of female self through cooking in her article on the politics of food in women's coming-of-age literature, but her analysis focuses primarily on maternal sacrifice in the kitchen and mother-daughter cooking experiences. While she does explore these issues in Alcott's *Little Women*, her analysis extends to women's coming-of-age texts from across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) and Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932), and she does not address the increasing role of hired cooks and serving girls in the late nineteenth century. In much of this post-bellum literature for young women, cooking is not necessarily a shared experience between mothers and daughters, as the majority of these experimental young cooks learn from the hired cooking staff as their mothers look on from a distance, and while Marmee does take on the role of the idealized domestic matriarch, Jo "[does] her best alone" in the kitchen, and the March girls learn to cook through trial and error rather than through mother-daughter learning experiences in the kitchen. My research deviates from Blackford's notion of food preparation as an outlet for female desire in that I focus on isolating experiences of cooking in these nineteenth-century domestic novels and short stories, and argue that food preparation and kitchen training take on empowering and meaningful qualities when they are *communal* experiences.

Cooking takes on political weight as women are trained in the kitchen. In her book, *Racial Innocence*, Kyla Wazana Tompkins explores the racialized body in nineteenth-century American food narratives, and as issues of race, gender, and class came to "expressed in terms of

food," the "bodies that laboured in kitchens came to be represented, in the unconscious of popular culture, as food" (16). While the discussion of race is not germane in this thesis, Tompkins's study is pertinent as it works to understand the politics of the domestic space—particularly, the domestic cooking space—through the experiences of the cook. Tompkins draws on the insurrections of the hired cook, as she suggests,

> [the kitchen] is the space from which the cook, the servant figure, so broadly stereotyped over the past two centuries, threatens to speak. In so doing, she threatens to infuse the food she produces—that her employers will eat—with the stifled political affect that the walls of the kitchen are supposed to contain. (17)

For Tompkins, the nineteenth-century kitchen is a political space where the working class servants threaten to speak through the food they prepare for upper-class families. Because the cook knew "the tastes of the master, the mistress, and the children," she knew intimate and personal details about them—details that could be used in order free "stifled political affect" from the confines of the kitchen (17). While Tompkins's research is primarily embedded in race—as she unpacks the ways in which the labouring black body in the kitchen is not only objectified in nineteenth-century food narratives, but is actually designated as food itself—her exploration of the labouring body in the kitchen and the politics of the domestic cooking space informs my reading of the kitchen as a space of class liminality. These coming-of-age texts often exhibit young women learning alongside their cooks in the kitchen, as basic food preparation skills are typically passed from servant to child rather than from mother to child in the texts I explore. Tompkins's analysis provides a launch point from which I analyze the kitchen as a space of class boundary transcedence and empowerment. Where she focuses primarily on race, eating bodies, and what she calls the "queer alimentary" (5)—that is, the connection between

oral and erotic pleasure implicit in eating—I contemplate children's complex social relationships with their own appetites and the issues of class and gender as they arise when girls and young women are trained in the kitchen.

Competence in the kitchen is a fundamental aspect of female life for the characters in these texts, and while cooking is often a learned skill shared between women and girls in these texts, it can also take the form of an isolating, self-taught lesson. In "Experiments," the eleventh chapter of *Little Women*, Jo decides to take on the kitchen duties and prepare lunch and dinner while Marmee and Hannah, the housemaid, leave home for the day. Jo spends the entirety of the novel fighting against the gender constraints that eventually overcome her conventionally masculine personality, and despite her best efforts, her "experiment" in the kitchen eventually leads to shame and failure, as she stands "hot, tired, and dispirited" (121). Jo quickly becomes frustrated in the kitchen, as she is left to her own devices without the guidance of Hannah, Marmee, or any of her sisters, and, we are told, "[l]anguage cannot describe the anxieties, experiences, and exertions which Jo underwent that morning, and the dinner she served up became a standing joke. Fearing to ask any more advice, she did her best alone, and discovered that something more than energy and good will is necessary to make a cook" (121). This "something more" in Alcott's writing is a sort of female spirit in the kitchen—Blackford suggests that it is a "magic" passed down from woman to woman in the kitchen (Blackford 46). Jo's reluctance to embrace her womanhood is reflected in her failures in the kitchen, particularly in her bread that "riz" enough to "[run] over the pans" (121). In her flustered attempt, Jo's "bread burned black, for the salad dressing so aggravated her that she let everything else go till she had convinced herself that she could not make it fit to eat" (121). The image of "good bread" is one that frequently surfaces throughout Alcott's young women's oeuvre—from Jo's failures in

breadmaking in *Little Women*, to Rose's bread-based health remedy in *Eight Cousins* (1875), to the idyllic society of bread-people in "The Candy Country" (1885)—and Tompkins recognizes this pattern while making cultural connections between "bread, democratic citizenship, and female economic power" in Alcott's work (124). For Tompkins, Alcott's domestic coming-of-age stories "contrast [with] twentieth-century feminist configurations of the kitchen as a female prison, [and] for this radical nineteenth-century woman writer domesticity and its elaborate skills are conditions that give rise to female independence" (124). Perhaps the most "elaborate skill" in the kitchen is the ability to compose, knead, and bake the perfect loaf of bread, and Alcott's Grahamite[2] values regarding the health benefits of bread create strong, hearty young women in her coming-of-age texts. A bread-making woman is a self-sufficient woman—Alcott repeats time and time again in her texts that the ability to bake a wholesome loaf of bread is the most important skill a woman can possess—and the kitchen functions as a space of learning, meaningful experience, and proud womanhood. However, Tompkins's analysis of breadmaking as a means of economic power and self-sufficience in Alcott's fiction—particularly in *Work*, Alcott's 1873 novel that borders on young adult and adult fiction—does not take into consideration the heavily nostalgic themes present in much of Alcott's children's oeuvre. I argue that the nostalgia for the "old-fashioned" relationships to food, eating, and meal preparation that permeate these novels and short stories—both by Alcott and other prominent female authors of children's texts from the period—does encourage young women to become self-sufficient, but

[2] Sylvester Graham (1794-1851) was an American dietary reformer who argued that salvation depended upon physiological adherence to Godly law, and made connections between spiritual and physiological morality. He suggested that the moral diet consisted of fruit, vegetables, and bread, and deviation from this plain, bland diet was the primary cause of fatal illness (*American National Biography*). Alcott was exposed to Grahamite dietary regimens from an early age, as her father, Bronson Alcott, developed Fruitlands, a failed utopian experiment that condemned all products produced by the death or labour of animals (proto-veganism) (Tompkins 134).

not outside of the home. The ability to construct, knead, and bake the perfect loaf of bread prepares young women for success within the domestic sphere, and allows them to become self-sufficient in the kitchen—a fundamental quality of the old-fashioned, domestic womanhood that these coming-of-age texts idealize.

"Good bread" is a component of the diet of reform that pervades much of Alcott's children's oeuvre, as she advocates a Graham-inspired simple diet throughout her work, aimed at creating healthy and useful young female bodies. She is particularly outspokenly moralizing in terms of young women and food in her short-story "Jerseys; or, the Girls' Ghost," first published in the July 1884 volume of *St. Nicholas*. As the story opens, the young female students at Madame Stein's Select Boarding School "[stand] chatting about the register" about Miss Orne, their new teacher, whose "fine figure" and lovely "roses and cream" complexion becomes a preoccupation for the young scholars (680). The girls, whose "minds and manners were much cultivated, but bodies rather neglected," recognize that Miss Orne's "fine figure" is not a product of French corsets or complicated back braces, but rather of "plenty of rest, fine food, and fresh air" (682), and become concerned that Miss Orne's healthy habits will be encouraged in their own education. "Plump Cordelia" worries that Miss Orne is energetic, and proclaims, "I do hate to be hurried," while fashionable Maude says, "I do hope Miss Orne isn't full of the new notions about clothes, and food, and exercise, and rights and rubbish of that sort. Mamma hates such ideas, and so do I" (681). While these young women are displaced from the home and are placed under the domestic-educational responsibilities of teachers at finishing school, Maude takes away lessons in "old-fashioned" womanhood from her mother. In a period where issues of dress reform, suffrage, dietetic reform, and women's rights were becoming more and more prominent, these emergent young women function as a new generation of womanhood—a role that carries

with it anxieties in upper-middle class fashionable American society. While Alcott's stories do idealize the "old-fashioned" homemaking woman, she incorporates issues of health and dietetic reform into her fiction in order to cultivate active, hearty, properly nourished women. As Tompkins suggests, "In Alcott's novels the woman who leaves home does not bring disaster to it […]; instead, she brings a domestic program of dietetic, moral and physiological reform with her into the world, one that is ultimately recuperated by the household (Tompkins 126). Miss Orne's lessons in food and eating, while beneficial to the overall health of the young women, ultimately prepare them for success in the household—her weight loss regimen for "dear, fat Cordy" involves "brisk runs […], and less confectionery, sleep, and lounging in easy chairs," while in the cafeteria, "[p]itchers of fresh milk took the place of tea and coffee; cake and pie were rarely seen, but better bread, plain puddings, and plenty of fruit" (682, 683). The ultimate goal for these young women is not necessarily to become beacons of health, but rather to "wear a jersey and have it sit elegantly" (680)—to return home and turn the heads of the boys they left behind. Upon her return to the boarding school, Madame Stein, impressed with the physiological differences Miss Orne was able to make in her young female students, says to herself, "Looks are everything with women, and I have never been able to show such a beautiful bouquet of blooming creatures at my breaking up as I shall this year" (684). While Miss Orne and these young "blooming creatures" are displaced from the home, they do not, as Tomkins notes, "bring disaster to it" (Alcott 684, Tompkins 126). Rather, the girls return home from Madame Stein's with waists "in perfect proportion to the rest of [their] youthful shape[s]," and Cordy boasts, "I don't have to worry about my buttons flying off *à la* Clara Peggotty"[3] (685). Strict dietary

[3] Here Cordy is referring to the character of Clara Peggotty in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*. Peggotty, described as a large woman, is David's nurse and his mother's housekeeper, and her buttons frequently pop off her dress due to her enthusiastic hugs.

reform with an emphasis on milk, fruit, and especially good bread shape these young women into attractive, womanly, marriageable subjects. While they do not necessarily return from boarding school with well-developed cooking skills, they do re-enter fashionable society with relationships to their appetites that complement and consecrate their futures as wives and, therefore, preparers of food.

As Miss Orne instills dietary awareness in her young women, her task is primarily a social one—the students at Madame Stein's are being trained to develop appetites that are appropriate for women in upper-middle-class American society. In her article on eating bodies in nineteenth century children's literature, Jacqueline Labbe explores the ways in which children with voracious appetites in these texts are the eaters, while the "the pure, uncorrupted child is not the noneater by rather the eaten" (94). She uses texts such as Lewis Carrol's *Through the Looking Glass* and Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* to unpack the parallel binaries between good/bad and eater/eaten, and argues that "[w]hen food transmutes from nourishment for the child's body, eating is less about satisfying corporeal needs than about symbolizing moral needs" (101). "Throughout the nineteenth century," Labbe suggests, "food was a contentious issue. Whether it was the dining etiquette newly demanded by an increasingly prosperous middle class, […] or the moralities attached to eating too much or too little or the right stuff or the wrong stuff, eating, appetite, and digestion occupied many minds" (93). As the emerging middle class thrives and becomes more and more entrenched in post-bellum American culture, food in these texts becomes a facet of social ritual—young upper- middle-class women, especially those in Alcott's fiction, are expected to stifle their hunger and the biological components implicit in relationships to food in order to develop socially conditioned appetites conducive to bourgeois expectations. Eating is less a biological imperative and more a feature of high society, as shared meals and

extravagant dinner parties permeate these nineteenth-century children's texts, and "for middle and upper classes, for whom the next meal was a certainty," a regulated appetite is a moral appetite (Labbe 93). As I argue in this thesis, most often in Alcott's fiction, along with the literature from other prominent authors in the period, women learn to adhere to expectations regarding their appetites in the home, where they develop relationships to food based primarily on its preparation and share meals with their families and peers. They take lessons on cooking, serving, and cleaning up after meals in the kitchen, typically alongside employed cooks and serving women, and learn aspects of dining etiquette and hosting dinner parties alongside their mother figures (often aunts).

An essential theme that permeates the majority of Alcott's novels and short-stories is that of developing an appropriate middle-class relationship to food—a relationship entrenched in gender difference where girls and young women cook and boys and young men eat. As she draws lessons regarding appetite restraint and appropriate gender roles regarding food from prominent dietary reformists such William Alcott, Louisa May Alcott's fiction typically adheres to "old-fashioned" attitudes toward eating and food preparation. Her young women thrive in the kitchen while her young men take on restrained, industrious appetites suitable for the useful workingman. She does, however, offer her young readers a playful glimpse into a world without eating conventions—a "candy country" where people, animals, and the environment are composed entirely of confectionary—in her 1885 short story "The Candy Country." This short-story, while different from her typical literary formula in that it is displaced from the domestic sphere, uses food as a means of expressing codes of gender and class and situates a young woman in a socially-appropriate relationship to food. As Lily embarks on her short walk to school one morning, she stops on the bridge crossing the stream on her way, and naughtily

begins tossing stones onto the turtles "sunning themselves on the rocks" (16). Just as she picks up a stone to toss at the "three big fellows close by," her mother's "red sun umbrella" is taken up by the wind, carrying young Lily with it into unknown territory (16). Looking around the area in which she finds herself, "an agreeable smell met her nose," and she soon realizes she is in a candy land—an undiscovered realm where not only the land is candy, but "Bits of babies rocked in open-work cradles, and sugar boys and girls played with sugar toys in the most natural way" (16). Lily quickly realizes that she is no longer a component of the nineteenth-century American culture that places restraints on her appetite, and decides, "I'll live here, and eat candy all day long, with no tiresome school or patchwork to spoil my fun" (17). She has escaped her womanly destiny in domestic drudgery, yet even in the Candy Country there are strict sexual conventions controlling what—and whom, for that matter—young women are to eat. As she is taste-testing the Candy Country's population, she notes,

> The babies were made of plain sugar, but the grown people had different flavors. The young ladies were flavored with violet, rose, and orange; the gentlemen were apt to have cordials of some sort inside of them, as she found when she ate one now and then slyly, and got her tongue bitten by the hot, strong taste as a punishment. (17)

Here, Alcott enmeshes female sexual experimentation with unpleasant food experience. Women's bodies are mild, delicately flavored, and enticingly consumable, while the male body is strong and bitter—even in the Candy Country, women's bodies are inherently edible as opposed to their biting male counterparts. However, the "violet, rose, and orange" flavors attributed to the "young ladies" in this society of sweets are not universal to all women, as "the old maids had lemon, hoar-hound, flag-root, and all sorts of sour, bitter things in them, and were

not eaten much" (17-18). By ascribing sweet, luxurious flavors and textures to the fair young women and the babies, which "melted in her mouth," while attributing bitterness and sourness to men and old maids, Alcott creates a culture where women are coaxed into conventional domesticity, with its "dear babies" and "delicately flavored young women" by avoiding sexual experimentation and viewing "old maids" with scorn (17). The Candy Country is not as far removed from Western convention as Lily supposes.

"The Candy Country" draws on the fantasies of children from every corner of the American class system; it offers an escape to a world of indulgence where appetites remain unchecked and nutrition is of no concern, and while it does not necessarily illustrate classed children (Lily is the only child in the story), it reproduces class through food itself. For Alcott's young readers, the Candy Country is the ultimate freedom fantasy, yet the fantasy quickly dissolves as Lily's stay extends, as does the freedom. After eating only confectionery for days,

> by and by, when [Lily] had seen everything, and eaten so much sweet stuff that at last she longed for plain bread and butter, she began to get cross, as children always do when they live on candy; and the little people wished she would go away, for they were afraid of her. No wonder, when she would catch up a dear sugar baby and eat him, or break some respectable old grandmamma all into bits because she reproved her for naughty ways. (18)

As Lily's diet continues to consist solely of candy and unsubstantial, sugary foods, she becomes irritable, unpleasant, and even violent. While her body seems to remain healthy and functional—there is no indication that Lily's eating habits affect her appearance, unlike "dear, fat Cordy" in "Jerseys; or, the Girls' Ghost"—it is primarily her mind that begins to suffer from constant indulgence in confectionery ("Jerseys" 683). As she grows more and more cross and the

residents of the Candy Country grow increasingly impatient with her outbursts, she decides to leave, and "she hurrie[s] over the mountains of Gibraltar Rock that divided the city of Saccharissa from the great desert of brown sugar that lay beyond" (18). Lily soon finds herself in "Cake-land" and makes the acquaintance of Ginger Snap, "one of the tallest men" among the gingerbread people (18). Ginger Snap explains that the people of the Candy Country are deplored by those in Cake-land, and insists she will "get on better here with us Brownies than with the lazy Bonbons, who never work and are all show. They won't own us, though we are all relate through our grandparents Sugar and Molasses. […] Poor creatures, silly and sweet and unsubstantial! I pity 'em!" (19) Just as Alcott works into the story overt issues of gender and social propriety in the Candy country, she also develops a structured class hierarchy as she introduces residents of Cake-land and later Bread-land. However, in Alcott's fantasy food realm, the rich, idle Bonbons in the Candy Country are considered members of the lower class, and as citizens begin working industrially they gain mobility in the social hierarchy. Lily questions whether or not Ginger Snap grows tired of baking ginger bread everyday, to which he explains, "Yes; but I want to be promoted, and I never shall be till I've done my best, and won the prize here" (19) The prize, Ginger Snap explains—the ultimate goal to which every gingerbread person strives—is "a cake of condensed yeast. That puts a soul into me, and I begin to rise till I am able to go over the hills yonder into the blessed land of bread, and be one of the happy creatures who are always wholesome, always needed, and without which the world below would be in a bad way" (19) To move into the highest class designation in the fantasy food world is to become "the perfect loaf," and requires sacrificing the body in order to nourish those of young children in America. While Alcott does emulate in "The Candy Country" the social stratification at work in nineteenth-century American culture, she reverses the hierarchy that places the idle

wealthy in the upper class, and instead designates the labouring, self-sacrificing workingman (literally, working *man*, as Alcott glosses over the roles of women in Cake-land and Bread-land) as the pinnacle of social hierarchy. Alcott's *Candy Country* is as much a commentary of class as it is a lesson in gender expectations—an aspect of the short story to which I return in my conclusion—and she uses food here as a means of encouraging young eaters to adopt conventional and appropriate eating behaviors in relation to their class and gender identities.

Exploring food in these coming-of-age texts that emerge at the peak of Alcott's writing for children—texts that celebrate the hardworking, healthy woman in the domestic sphere—conjures the question: what about the boys? Alcott has often been criticized for her one-dimensional, vacant male characters—Hugh McElaney suggests that Alcott's "freaking of boyhood" feminizes the male body in *Under the Lilacs* as she "redesigns and exploits young male bodies by fusing images of disability, ambiguities of gender, and feral hybridity" (139), while Ken Parille criticizes Alcott's feminization of Laurie in *Little Women.* If, in these domestic stories following girls into young womanhood, young women are the preparers of food, then boys and young men are the eaters. However, tensions arise when the image of the voracious, insatiable male appetite comes up against the ideally masculine nineteenth-century man.

While Louisa May Alcott's coming-of-age fiction is the topic of discussion in this introductory section of my thesis, as her children's oeuvre is expansive and rife with food narrative, I also engage with texts from authors such as Susan Coolidge, Eleanor H. Porter, and Sarah Orne Jewett throughout the three chapters that follow. In the first chapter, I explore the ways in which boys in Alcott's *Under the Lilacs* and *Little Women* series, along with Dorry in Coolidge's *What Katy Did*, struggle to adopt appropriate relationships to food and their appetites—relationships that guide them into successful futures as ideally masculine men. I argue

that throughout these texts—novels targeted toward girls and young women in the nineteenth century—young male characters struggle to negotiate their identities as enthusiastic eaters of female-prepared food with social pressures to develop into hardworking, masculine men in control of their appetites. I analyze conflicting images of the controlled male eater and the demonized "fat boy" in these texts, and contend that while the restrained male eater functions as a necessary component to capitalistic post-bellum America, the gluttonous fat boy embodies its downfall. Authors of these coming-of-age texts construct ideal male eaters—eaters that curb their appetites in boyhood and adopt what I call an *industrious appetite*—and these controlled, modern, industrious appetites conflict with the hearty, agrarian male appetites idealized in "old-fashioned" relationships to food.

In the second and third chapters, I shift my focus from boys and young men to girls and young women, as I explore the means by which issues of class and gender identity influence women in cooking and eating spaces. The second half of this thesis hinges on arguments of the history of space, and the ways in which food is deeply intertwined with architectural shifts in domestic spaces. Chapter Two primarily looks at Eleanor H. Porter's 1913 novel, *Pollyanna*, where I argue that Pollyanna, who is the daughter of a poor, deceased clergyman and the niece of a wealthy upper-class woman, is able to use food and eating spaces as a means of transcending class boundaries. As I juxtapose Pollyanna alongside similar characters from earlier novels by Susan Coolidge and Sarah Orne Jewett, I suggest that Pollyanna channels her complicated class status in order to convert the kitchen and dining areas into spaces of liminality—her eagerness to learn alongside the family's cook in the kitchen, along with her relationships with both upper and lower class eaters in the novel, allow her to use food as a vehicle through which she creates classless spaces. However, problems arise as I consider the means by which food labour only

becomes meaningful and respected when upper-class women dabble in it, thereby reaffirming the class boundaries they set out to dissolve. The third chapter continues exploring themes of space, and in it I analyze the ways in which the kitchen became an increasingly feminized space in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the communal hearth was gradually replaced with smaller ovens. I argue that by creating spaces of collective cooking and food sharing, these authors transcend the boundaries of the feminized cooking space and reject social rituals that isolate women in the kitchen.

These introductory explorations of Alcott's fiction for young people are microcosms of the close readings arising throughout this thesis—close readings of children's texts by both Alcott and other prominent women authors. As I consider operations of food at work in social construction and the crosscurrents of gender and class, I work to unpack the complex relationships between these characters—both male and female—and their appetites. The boys and girls in these texts are shaped into successful members of American society through constrained relationships to food—both its consumption and its preparation. In coming-of-age fiction by authors such as Alcott, Coolidge, Porter, and Jewett, the kitchen and dining room are settings for social and political lessons that are based heavily on class and gender, and throughout these texts girls and boys work within the walls of the domestic space to find their proper place as eaters. While this introductory section works to situate young *women's* relationships to food and the appetite in late nineteenth-century America, I shift my focus to boys and young men in the next section before launching into discussions of space and young women's resonance in the kitchen in the final two. In a culture where women prepare and men consume, children must come to terms with their socially conditioned appetites and food roles within the domestic sphere before they can transition into functional, successful adults in

American society.

Chapter 1

"Wish I was a better boy. Nothing pertikeler for tea":
Food, Boyhood, and the Industrious Masculine Appetite

In Louisa May Alcott's *Little Men* (1871), the second book in her popular Little Women series, the young boys at Plumfield school are thrilled to learn that Daisy, one of the few girls at the all-boys' school, has begun cooking lessons in a small kitchen constructed in the children's nursery. However, the boys are not necessarily looking forward to Daisy's lessons in cooking by her "ownty-downty self," nor even to the "darling pies" that are to function as rewards for the boys' good behavior (91). Rather, the industrious boys are interested in the mechanical aspects of the kitchen: "Demi offered to buy the boiler on the spot, to be used in a steam-engine which he was constructing; and Ned declared that the best and biggest saucepan was just the thing to melt his lead in when he ran bullets, hatchets, and such trifles" (98). Rather than becoming preoccupied with the promises of Daisy's cakes and pies, the boys recognize the kitchen as a source of mechanical treasure—a space from which they can help their own industrial endeavors. Alcott creates in these boys the image of the ideal male eater—an eater who resists indulgence and instead dedicates himself to manual labour and industry. Texts such as the Little Women series, Alcott's *Under the Lilacs*, and Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* construct ideal eaters while condemning and even demonizing the image of the obese child, whose very existence conflicts with the capitalist industrial ideal. Young male characters suppress their urges to indulge in food as a means of training themselves to become masculine, successful adults. Where girls and young women are trained to cook and serve the men in their lives, boys are conditioned to become appropriate eaters—an identity that is grounded in resistance to indulgence and

controlled appetites.[4] In these texts featuring the development of strong, successful men, indulgent "fat boys" are the enemy, while muscular, lithe boys with industrious appetites—appetites that are controlled and repressed in order to empower boys dedicated to capital success in the public sphere—are recognized as ideal young members of American culture. These nineteenth-century coming-of-age texts are shaped by the shift from hearty agrarian appetites to controlled industrial ones. Louisa May Alcott, whose texts consistently resist modern representations of appetite and illustrate nostalgia for "old-fashioned" relationships to food where girls feed and boys are fed, particularly struggles to come to terms with the controlled appetite as an aspect of post-bellum masculinity—she internalizes a fraught relationship between nostalgia and progressiveness.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, young men's conduct books by authors such as William Alcott and John Harvey Kellogg advocated minimalistic diets, temperance, and industrious attitudes beginning at a young age, and suggested that manhood is embedded in one's willingness and ability to perform manual labour and create a place for himself in the economic sphere. Just as the mid-nineteenth century marks a period of enormous social, political, and historical change in America, so too does it mark a change in attitudes surrounding masculinity and American manhood, and these shifts are enmeshed in relationships to food, eating, and the appetite. As America prepared itself for the Civil War, and industry in America continued to expand at an astonishing rate, attitudes toward masculinity stemming from the turn of the nineteenth century began to shift (Kimmel 5-6). In a period that rigorously redefined men's lives, one that includes the Industrial Revolution and the American Civil War, there is no question that

[4] I use the terms "girls" and "young women" distinctively, along with "boys" and "young men." By young men and young women, I am referring to adolescents and those entering adulthood (ages 13-21), while girls and boys refer to children below the age of pubescence (ages 3-12).

representations of masculinity also took on significant changes, and, as Michael Kimmel suggests,

> At the turn of the nineteenth century, American manhood was rooted in landownership (the Genteel Patriarch) or in the self-possession of the independent artisan, shopkeeper, or farmer (the Heroic Artisan). In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, though, the Industrial Revolution had a critical effect on those earlier definitions. American men began to link their sense of themselves as men to their position in the volatile marketplace, to their economic success—a far less stable yet more exciting and potentially rewarding peg upon which to hang one's identity. (6)

As William Alcott (1798-1859), Louisa May's second cousin and her father's close companion, suggests in his 1849 manual, *The Young Man's Guide*, "no person possessing a sound mind in a healthy body, has a right to live in this world without labour. […] To live in idleness, even if you have the means, is not only injurious to yourself, but a species of fraud upon the community, and the children" (38-39). In the antebellum period, manhood was predicated on one's willingness to labour, both as a child and an adult, and while the notion of the ideal industrious boy carried on into the Civil War and the post-bellum period, Kimmel notes another important shift regarding American manhood in the years leading up to the twentieth century. "At the turn of the century," Kimmel suggests, "*manhood* was replaced gradually by the term *masculinity*, which referred to a set of behavioral traits and attitudes that were contrasted now with a new opposite, *femininity*" (emphasis in the original 81). While boys and young men continued to be expected to partake in industrious activity beginning at a young age, their primary responsibility became separating themselves from any sort of feminine identity—a task that involved removing oneself from

women and girls.

This shifting toward masculinity as a complete separation from femininity is the cultural influence on many of these nineteenth-century children's texts. This new way of understanding masculinity also took a toll on social expectations regarding the male body, and the rise of the muscular Christian movement in the mid-late nineteenth century set precedence for the ideal masculine body.[5] Anthony Rotundo notes that the end of the nineteenth century saw a rise in American men's preoccupation with altering their bodies as a means of distinguishing themselves from the female physique: "Men of all ages noted their weight with care and precision, while young males in their teens and twenties recorded changes of body dimensions in rapt detail" (223). While physical activity, weight-lifting, and most importantly, consistent manual labor are the most common prerequisites for a masculine physique in men's conduct manuals emerging from the period, food also plays a crucial role in the development of the ideal male body. In her study of male appetites and class in the nineteenth-century British novel, Gwen Hyman draws from the writings of Dr. J Edwin Danelson, a prominent nineteenth-century physician and writer, who argues, "the accumulation of fat in superfluity is a disease […]. It attends indolence, and *excessive eating and drinking*" (emphasis added, qtd. in Hyman 76). Achieving the ideal male form calls for diet control—commentators on male physique and writers of conduct manuals emerging from the period, while focusing heavily on labour and physical activity, draw connections between the strong, male body and modest, controlled appetites. Muscular Christianity, advocated by Charles Kinsley in the 1860s, calls for the ideal man of God—both in physical and mental capacities (Hall 7). Striking a balance in terms of the ideal Christian man involves "an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and

[5] The term "muscular Christianity" was coined by T.C. Sandars in a review of Charles Kingley's *Two Years Ago* (1857).

the ability to shape and control the world" (Hall 7). Muscular Christianity pushes for a manliness entrenched in both physical and moral strength, and the healthy, muscular, masculine body is the site of ideal Christianity. Emerging at the height of the Industrial Revolution and remaining prominent throughout the Civil War, "muscular Christianity was an attempt to assert control over a world that had seemingly gone mad" (Hall 9). Muscular Christianity is a means of returning to a society where men dominate physically, mentally, and spiritually. The movement is also heavily embedded in class, along with the masculine body: the body of the muscular Christian, according to Dennis W. Allen in his work on the body politics of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, "is also a class body, the body of the bourgeoisie" (Allen 119). The ideal man in the mid-late nineteenth century is middle class, muscular, and controlled, and the boys' appetites in these nineteenth-century children's texts are shaped to adhere to the image of the muscular Christian. The boys in Alcott's *Little Women* and its sequels and *Under the Lilacs*, as well as Dorry in Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* series, struggle to establish their masculinity and develop socially acceptable bodies in their childhood in order to grow into successful manhood.

"Smears of molasses on the sleeve of his jacket": Boys and the Ideal Masculine Appetite

The mid-nineteenth century saw an influx of young men's conduct manuals as understandings of masculinity began to change with the threat of Civil War and Industrial Revolution. The conduct manual was a central literary component in middle-class families: they were read widely by parents, children, and general readers alike, and, as Jane Donawerth suggests, they "helped establish the middle class as a group with shared interests by emphasizing gender roles" (5). The content of these manuals undoubtedly influenced writers of children's fiction. For Louisa May Alcott, the most influential of these behavioral reform writers—on her

life in particular—was William Alcott. Best known for his role as a pioneer in nineteenth-century vegetarianism, William Alcott was also a bestselling author of conduct manuals for both men and women. In his *Young Man's Guide* (1834), perhaps his most popular text for young people, he underscores the importance of labour and industry in young men's lives and heavily criticizes their indolence and indulgence in rich, excessive foods. He suggests that "no person possessing a sound mind in a healthy body, has a right to live in this world without labour," and while labour and industry are crucial to the development of both physical and mental health, indulgence in meat, sugar, and frivolous innutritious foods undermines health and success (*The Young Man's Guide* 38). With the rise of the bourgeoisie during the Industrial Revolution began a culture rooted in lavish social meals and the joy of eating (McWilliams 109), and Alcott unequivocally rejected social rituals embedded in food, suggesting that

> indulgence is *far short* of gross drunkenness and gluttony is to be deprecated; and the more so, because it is too often looked upon as being no crime at all. Nay, there are many persons, who boast of a refined taste in manners connected with eating and drinking, who are so far from being ashamed of employing their thoughts on the subject, that it is their boast that they do. (*YMG* 62)

William Alcott recognizes a tendency for young boys to indulge freely in lavish food and become preoccupied with their appetites in general, and he works against these seemingly harmless boyish qualities by exposing their true dangers. Indulgence is, according to Alcott, "destructive to human happiness," and worse, the "*love* of what are called 'good eating and drinking,' if very unamiable in grown persons, is perfectly hateful in a *youth*; and, if he *indulge* in the propensity, he is already half ruined" (italics in original, *YMG* 63). Following her cousin, Louisa May Alcott disciplines her male protagonists, particularly Laurie in the *Little Women*

series and Ben in *Under the Lilacs*, against the "hateful" influence of indulgence in youth, as their appetites are shaped by the masculine identities into which they eventually emerge. Laurie's carefree, indulgent appetite shifts to a more restrained relationship toward food as he enters into manhood and the business sphere, while Ben consistently maintains a distant relationship to his appetite as he is plunged into industrial masculinity as a boy.

The boys in these nineteenth-century coming-of-age texts continually struggle to develop an appropriate relationship to their appetites and the food that surrounds them, while coming to terms with the fact that an uncontrolled, indulgent attitude toward food conflicts with the tenets of masculinity. In Alcott's *Little Women*, Laurie struggles to negotiate his own masculinity throughout his boyhood while negotiating his eating habits among the March girls. As the novel progresses, Laurie's grandfather becomes increasingly concerned about the boy's passion for music and lack of industrial motivation. As Parille notes in his work on masculinity and boyhood in *Little Women*, "Antebellum conduct books and Gilded Age success manuals never acknowledged art as a viable career for middle-class men," and not only does Laurie's grandfather fear for the boy's manhood, but the March sisters show concern as well. Amy teases Laurie for his indolence and propensity for spending his days lounging and eating, as she nicknames him "Lazy Laurence," and Meg questions whether he "will ever grow up" (263). Laurie typically responds to these criticisms of his impeding manhood with indifference, and he avoids in-depth discussions of his masculine shortcomings by turning to food. When Meg wonders aloud "in a matronly tone" whether Laurie will ever grow up, he sardonically replies, "I'm doing my best, ma'am, but can't get much higher, I'm afraid, as six feet is about all men can do in these degenerate days. […] [A]nd as I'm tremendously hungry, I propose an adjournment" (263). Laurie does mature throughout *Little Women*, though, and, "in spite of his indolent ways,

[has] a young man's hatred of subjection, a young man's restless longing to try the world for himself," and as his understanding of the public sphere changes and his attitude toward adulthood becomes more economically and industrially-centered, so too does his relationship with food (*LW* 153).

As Laurie grows closer to the March sisters in *Little Women*, he invites them to a picnic he is planning to host in the park, and excitedly informs Jo, "Some English girls and boys are coming to see me tomorrow and I want to have a jolly time. If it's fine, I'm going to pitch my tent in Longmeadow, and row up the whole crew to lunch and croquet—have a fire, make messes,[6] gypsy fashion, and all sorts of larks" (128). Along with his peers, he indulges in his appetite freely and—at this point—without judgment or reprimand, as lunch coincides with lighthearted play and the narrator points out that "youth is seldom dyspeptic, and exercise develops wholesome appetites" (134). However, as the novel progresses, Laurie struggles to negotiate between his hunger and expectation that he become a mature and socially acceptable man. During their picnic lunch in Longmeadow, Laurie and the other boys eat like boys: they partake in the meal indulgently, and the meal draws to a close when "the girls would not, and the boys could not, eat any more" (134). The girls' appetites are restrained, while Laurie and the other boys eat freely and indulgently. However, Laurie's relationship to his appetite becomes more constrained as he begins to transition into manhood: it begins with his refusal to eat dinner after locking himself in his bedroom and demanding "[Grandfather] ought to trust me, and not act as if I was a baby. […] He's got to learn that I'm able to take care of myself, and don't need anyone's apron strings to hold on by" (226). After making amends with his grandfather, who apologizes for treating him like a "baby," Laurie descends to the dining room "to partake of

[6] The term "mess" in these texts refers to large meals. Characters frequently partake in collective "messes" on special occasions, particularly in Alcott's fiction.

humble pie dutifully with his grandfather" (231). At this point in Laurie's young manhood, eating becomes a duty rather than an indulgent aspect of play. While Jo partakes in her "experiments" in the kitchen, Laurie avoids the cooking space and takes on his role as enthusiastic eater to his female cooking counterpart, despite Jo's mishaps in the kitchen. As Jo's guests sit down to enjoy the meal prepared for them by the debutante cook, it becomes obvious that Jo has mistakenly added salt to the cream instead of sugar as everyone makes "a wry face,"—however, as the majority of the eaters "dwindled sadly after the picking over, […] [Laurie] was eating away manfully, though there was a slight pucker about his mouth and he kept his eye fixed on his plate" (122). Laurie recognizes his role as "manful" eater and the pressures that Jo faces in terms of filling the man, and despite Jo's concern that he is "accustomed to all sorts of elegance," he is mindful of Jo's embarrassment and suppresses any childish urge to draw attention to her shortcomings in the kitchen.

As he transitions into adulthood, Laurie's more masculine relationship to food functions as a sort of rite of passage into manhood, and his grandfather's concerns for his future fade away as Laurie abandons his goal to be a musician and begins studying at Harvard. While Alcott's sequels to the novel—*Little Men* (1871) and *Jo's Boys* (1886)—focus primarily on character developments of young boys, Laurie remains a one-dimensional character throughout the series. Though he functions as a sort of distant supporter of Plumfield, Jo and Fritz Bhaer's school for boys, the narrator frequently makes note of Laurie's "great house, […] his pretty wife and little fairy of a daughter" (64). Laurie, referred to in the sequels as either young Mr. Laurence or Uncle Teddy, is a successful businessman and father to the beloved little Bess, and despite his influence on Plumfield as a recruiter and sponsor, Alcott addresses him only as a sort of generous figurehead—a financial success whose masculinity should be emulated by the boys and

admired by the girls. In short, he becomes his grandfather. In the first half of *Little Men*, Jo realizes that Daisy, Meg's daughter and one of two female students at Plumfield, is struggling with the lack of domestic learning opportunities at the boys' school and she decides to purchase a children's kitchen in which Daisy can learn to cook and serve meals:

> So I travelled round among the toy shops, but everything large cost too much and I was thinking I should have to give it up, when I met Uncle Teddy. As soon as he knew what I was about, he said he wanted to help, and insisted on buying the biggest toy stove we could find. I scolded, but he only laughed, and teased me about my cooking when we were young, and said I must teach Bess as well as you, and went on buying all sorts of little things for my "cooking class" as he called it. (86)

In their adulthood, both Jo and Laurie have grown into their proper gender roles—Laurie is a respected businessman and Jo is able to cook wholesome meals for her family—and begin training the children in their lives to adhere to the very conventions with which they struggled as children. Jo explains to her young niece that their time in the kitchen "is to be useful play," and she is to make wholesome "little messes [as] rewards for the good boys" and small treats for when Uncle Teddy comes to visit for tea and "expects something uncommonly nice" (97, 86). While Daisy spends most of her days in the kitchen with Jo, "[learning] to make all kinds of things" (86), the boys take on their role as eaters, when they are rewarded for their good behavior by being served at dinner parties in Daisy's kitchen. As a grown man—one who is considered the pinnacle of masculine success by the boys in *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*—Laurie's relationship to food shifts and becomes one that is embedded in guiding children toward conventionally appropriate and socially acceptable behaviors surrounding food and eating. By avoiding

indulgence and excessive eating—in fact, Laurie does not eat at all in the *Little Women* sequels, but rather encourages girls and boys to adopt appropriate eating behaviours—he is, by nineteenth-century standards of manhood, the perfect eater.

While Laurie, and the other boys at Plumfield, for that matter, remain secondary characters in Alcott's *Little Women* series, she creates a deep and comprehensive character in Ben, the protagonist of her 1878 novel *Under the Lilacs*. As the novel opens, Bab and Betty Moss are startled by a clever poodle, Sancho, who steals the young girls' pound cake after distracting them with tricks. They soon learn that the well-trained dog is that of Ben Brown, a supposedly orphaned, prepubescent circus performer who has escaped his lifestyle and the abuse that accompanied it. Ben apologizes to the girls and their mother, and explains that although "the vittles looked so nice [he] couldn't help wantin' 'em" (24), he returns the cake that Sancho had stolen in hopes that the girls may enjoy their playtime. Despite the fact that Ben has eaten next to nothing over the course of his two-day journey away from his circus employer, he stifles his desires for the sake of the young girls' picnic, and upon listening to his story firsthand, the widowed Mrs. Moss decides to offer the young boy the spare bedroom in her home, as "the thought of the poor little fellow alone there for two days and nights with no bed but musty straw, no food but the scraps a dog brought him, was too much for her" (26). Despite Ben's supposed orphanhood, struggle with starvation, and history of abuse, he squelches his own gnawing hunger and makes the moral decision to return the precious "vittles." Here Alcott asserts a highly gendered philosophy of food—Ben maintains a controlled relationship to his appetite, despite the issues of poverty working against it, and Mrs. Moss, the provider and preparer of food, cannot bear to leave Ben hungry in the street. Alcott adheres the stereotypical social structures of food that she constructs in her Little Women series—constructions of eating where men eat and

women prepare—and despite Ben's poverty and near starvation, she typifies him as a middle-class eater with a curtailed and controlled appetite. Where Ben *could* indulge his appetite by stealing the young girls' cake—an urge that Alcott aligns with that of a dog—he chooses the moral, middle-class high ground and eats only when food is offered to him by a nurturing (and nourishing) mother.

Shortly after rebuilding his health with the Mosses, Ben meets Miss Celia, a wealthy young woman who has dedicated her early adulthood to caring for her ailing brother, Thorny. After becoming acquainted with Ben, she recognizes his industrious personality and hires him as a live-in caretaker for Thorny, explaining "I called you 'my boy' in play, now you shall be my boy in earnest; this shall be your home, and Thorny your brother" (105). Despite addressing Ben as a member of her family, she frequently refers to him as her "man-servant," highlighting not only his perpetual working class status and inability to transcend the hierarchal boundaries of his social identity, but also his dedication to labour and industry. Despite the fact that Ben "dearly love[s] to 'loaf' about and have a good deal of variety and excitement in his life," he grounds himself in labour—first as a stable boy at a neighboring farm, and afterward as a servant to Miss Celia and her brother. He resists the temptations of youth in favor of entering into industrial manhood. Ben functions as the antithesis of Laurie—a labourious, grounded young man who transcends boyhood indolence and adheres to the nineteenth-century precept that "all persons, without exception, ought to labour more or less, every day in the open air" (Alcott, William 42).

Ben's masculine, industrial behavior seeps into his relationship to food and his appetite—even as he is at risk of starvation, he returns the girls' cake based on moral principle—and just as he represses his boyish "desire to leave toil behind and roam away as care-free as the swallows," he also squelches any indulgent craving for food. Aside from regaining his strength after not

eating "a mite but what Sanch brought, for three days" (27), Ben does not eat in the novel—his surrounding peers often partake in celebratory feasts and social meals, but Ben himself is textually removed from these scenes. Toward the end of the novel, Miss Celia and the Moss family plan an extravagant thirteenth birthday party for their hardworking friend and employee, deciding on "something splendid, a 'grand combination,' as [Bab and Betty] used to call [their] droll mixtures of tragedy, comedy, melodrama and farce" (268). Mrs. Moss invites each one of Ben's classmates, and while Bab and Betty assure their guests that there would be "heaps of cakes" served at the party, food is not mentioned at all on the day of the celebration (280). Ben celebrates his birthday as a proper young man in control of his appetite, and among his peers he is illustrated as the pinnacle of ideal masculinity at thirteen years old. Surrounded by other boys in his age group, Ben's body becomes a sort of benchmark from which his peers contrast—particularly that of "fat Sam Kitteredge" (263). Sam, who is repeatedly compared to an elephant throughout the novel and often inconveniences the group of young boys with his insistence on finishing his "last cookie" and getting "one more drink," is indolent, indulgent, and spoiled, and while his laziness clearly plays an important role in his obesity, so too does his indulgence in confectonery. From the beginning of *Under the Lilacs*, Alcott frequently makes note of Ben's lithe, muscular body, and even upon the first meal shared between the boy and the Moss family, Mrs. Moss tells him, "Clean, sweet corn-husks ain't bad for young bones, even if they haven't got more flesh on them than yours have" (43). Ben is unsurprised by Mrs. Moss's mention of his lean body, and merely explains, "Fat ain't allowed in our profession, ma'am. The thinner the better for tight-ropes and tumblin'; likewise bareback ridin' and spry jugglin'. Muscle's the thing, and there you are" (43). As a circus performer, Ben's body is a spectacle—one that must exhibit strength and incredible athleticism, especially for a boy of twelve. His muscular body

exhibits the codes of his profession, and while the "lazy-bones" Sam Kitteredge's body reflects his lack of labour and identity as a member of the upper-middle class, Ben must maintain a lithe, strong physicality as a working-class young man. Shifting from circus performer to stable boy to domestic "man-servant," though, of course affects Ben's body type throughout the course of the novel. As Ben's father reunites with him after having been assumed dead, he playfully tells his son, "'You've been living in clover and got fat, you rascal,' and his father gave him a poke here and there, as Mr. Squeers did the plump Wackford, when displaying him as a specimen of the fine diet at Do-the-boys Hall. 'Don't believe I could put you up now if I tried'" (331). While Ben's body still contrasts with the upper-class friends and family he has developed over the course of his new urban life, his working-class travelling father immediately recognizes the beneficial changes in his son's growth resulting from a more substantial diet and a less physically-demanding livelihood.

Louisa May Alcott, whose writing is certainly influenced by her second cousin's advice manuals for young men, is not unique in her adherence to young men's expectations regarding food and indulgence. In Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* series, Dorry, the oldest boy in the Carr family, struggles to develop an appropriate appetite as he transitions from boyhood to manhood. In *What Katy Did*, the first installment of the three-part Katy series, the narrator introduces Katy Carr's six-year-old brother, Dorry, as "a pale, pudgy boy, with rather a solemn face, and smears of molasses on the sleeve of his jacket" (8). While his "smears of molasses" can be understood as a sign of his slovenliness, he is marked by the mess of food rather than by the dirt of play. The children in the Carr family—six in total—form close relationships based on their ages, and throughout the novel Dorry and his sister Joanna (affectionately referred to as "John" by the rest of the family) are inseparable. Their sibling relationship is grounded in their

complex gender identities, as "Dorry seemed like a girl who had got into boy's clothes by mistake, and Johnnie like a boy who, in a fit of fun, had borrowed his sister's frock" (8-9). While the most prominent aspect of Dorry's character is his feminine disposition, his tendency to identify with the girls in his family does not prevent him from having an enormous appetite. He is "apt to be disconsolate if he [is] kept waiting for his meals" (19), and while he is often regarded as a sort of mix-up—a girl trapped in a boy's body—his abnormally large appetite is a source of humor and, quite often, mockery throughout the novel. Dorry is a perpetually hungry child, and he struggles to strike an appropriate and balanced relationship to food. While the children share a picnic in "Paradise," their private play area in a marshy thicket near their home, each child shares his or her dreams in becoming adults. Dorry confides in his siblings, and explains to them, "I mean to have turkey everyday […] and batter puddings, not boiled ones you know, with brown shiny tops, and a great deal of pudding sauce to eat on them. And I shall be so big then that nobody will say, 'Three helps is quite enough for a little boy'" (19). Rather than eating with the *intention* of growing bigger, a process to which most young boys are expected to be dedicated, Dorry wants to grow in order to stifle any judgments surrounding his appetite. After he shares his dreams for adulthood, Katy cries out, "'Oh, Dorry, you pig!' […] while the others [scream] with laughter," and Dorry threatens to tell the stern Aunt Izzie (19). Dorry's appetite is consistently ridiculed throughout *What Katy Did*, and his relationship to food causes him confusion and anxiety. While the hearty appetites of other boys in his age group are celebrated and encouraged, Dorry's queerness—his identity as a "girl who had got into boy's clothes by mistake"—grounds him in shame surrounding his hunger and its satisfaction.

While his hunger is the most prominent aspect of Dorry's identity, he often works to keep his appetite private from his family members, especially his siblings, as a defense against their

constant mockery. After Dorry and John leave the picnic in Paradise, Katy proposes to the rest of the children, "If you won't tell, […] I'll let you see Dorry's journal. He kept it once for almost two weeks, and then gave it up. I found the book this morning in the nursery closet" (21). Dorry's journal, a private document meant to protect his humiliating appetite, is of course filled with food:

> *March* 13 — Had rost befe for dinner, and cabage, and potato and appel sawse, and rice-puding. I do not like rice-puding when it is like ours. Charley Slack's kind is rele good. Mush and sirop for tea.
>
> *March* 19 — Forgit what did. John and me saved our pie to take to scule.
>
> […]
>
> *March 21* — This is Sunday. Corn-befe for dinnir. Studdied my Bibel leson. Aunt Issy said I was greedy. Have resolved not to think so much about things to ete. Wish I was a better boy. Nothing pertikeler for tea. (21-22)

While the young girls laugh at Dorry's private thoughts, thoughts embedded in food, his journal exposes the shame he attempts to work through in regard to his appetite. He wishes he were "a better boy," a boy who can control his hunger, even as his resolution to curtail his fixation on food is followed quickly by a comment on tea. Lorinda Cohoon suggests that in mid-nineteenth century children's stories, "[o]ne of the 'aesthetic' principles related to boyhood food economies is that there is a kind of ugliness that is associated with selfish or greedy food behavior that boys can be trained to avoid prior to manhood" (136). While a hearty appetite does nurture growth and strength throughout boyhood, the appetite must be appropriately controlled—young men must strike a balance between hearty and greedy appetites, a balance with which Dorry struggles throughout the majority of the novel.

For Dorry, there is an abrupt turning point in terms of his relentless hunger, and he begins working against his pervasive hunger in order to make an appropriate transition into young manhood. While Katy is bedridden after injuring her spine in an accident involving a swing, the children receive anonymous Valentines, written by Katy herself in private. Each child's card praises their strengths and celebrates their individual beauty—every card, that is, except Dorry's. Dorry's Valentine was a didactic poem adapted from the nursery rhyme "Little Jack Horner":

> "Oh, Mother," he said,
>
> "Every tooth in my head
>
> Jumps and aches and is loose, O my!
>
> And it hurts me to eat
>
> Anything that is sweet—
>
> So what *will* become of my pie?"
>
> It were vain to describe
>
> How he roared and he cried,
>
> And howled like a miniature tempest;
>
> Suffice it to say,
>
> That the very next day,
>
> He had all his teeth pulled by a dentist! (162)

His card, which arrives shortly after a series of visits to the dentist, publicly shames him for his excessive and superfluous appetite and marks the end of Dorry's preoccupation with food; throughout the remaining chapters of the novel his appetite is not so much as mentioned. What is mentioned, though, is Dorry's newfound interest in mechanics, and by the time he is eight years old, he is fixing clocks and other small household devices. Two years after his visits to the

dentist and his Valentine's Day lesson, Dorry "was still a sober boy, and not specially quick in catching an idea, but he promised to turn out a valuable man" (210). Cohoon notes that nineteenth-century domestic children's stories emerging from children's periodicals "emphasize how children's use of food can indicate character traits that influence work habits and moral characteristics" (135). Just as Dorry makes the decision to control his appetite and focus instead on industrious activities, he begins on a path to "valuable" manhood. His gender is no longer ambiguous, just as his appetite is no longer shameful, and Dorry's reformed relationship to food grounds him in successful manhood based on control and industriousness.

What these authors are trying to work against through their manly, industrious boys are what Michael Kimmel refers to as "the sissy"—or, as Louisa May Alcott and Susan Coolidge illustrate them, the feminized "fat boy." Kimmel suggests that in post-bellum America,

> Most terrifying to men was the specter of the sissy. […] The sissy was outwardly feminine in demeanor, comportment, and affect. If manhood is defined by courage, generosity, modesty, dignity, wrote Rafford Pyke in his 1902 diatribe against sissies in *Cosmopolitan* magazine, then the sissy was "flabby, feeble, mawkish…chicken-hearted, cold and fearful." (83)

Young men who consistently indulge in rich foods throughout boyhood, as they abandon industrial labour in favour of filling their stomachs, develop soft and femininized bodies, and according to renowned nineteenth-century American physician, Alfred Stillé, "a man with feminine traits of character, or with the frame and carriage of a female, is despised by both the sex he ostensibly belongs to, and that of which he is a once a caricature and a libel" (qtd. in Kimmel 83). Both Alcott and Coolidge warn against the dangers of over-eating—particular the social dangers—and use the indulgent eaters in their novels to guide their young readers into

understanding appropriate masculine methods of eating. Each of these nineteenth-century canonical children's texts offers the image of the obese child as a reference point from which to contrast moral, socially-acceptable eating behavior; in *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*, Alcott introduces Stuffy the "mealbag," in *Under the Lilacs*, Ben is antagonized by the "fat Sam Kitteredge," and in *What Katy Did*, Dorry must overcome the influence of perhaps the most threatening "fat boy" in his life: himself. In contrast to the fat boys in Alcott's texts, Dorry recognizes the immorality in his relationship to food, and replaces his insatiable appetite with useful, industrial behavior. Stuffy and Sam Kitteredge in Alcott's novels, however, remain beacons of immorality and shameful behavior, as Alcott denies them of any sort of moral redemption or masculine dignity. The indulgent, over-eating boy represents the antithesis of the controlled, masculine eater, and is therefore the antithesis of capitalistic, labouring America, and in each of these texts the fat boy is vilified, demonized, and shamed.

"I wish I loved my lessons as much as I do my dinner": Alcott's Fat Boys and Eating Shame

In *Under the Lilacs*, Ben develops a deeply antagonistic relationship with Sam Kitteredge, a wealthy boy whose unfamiliarity with the physical plight of the working class is a constant source of frustration for Ben. After Sam dismisses the intense physical demands of Ben's former career as a child circus performer, Ben retorts, "Much you know about it, old chap. It's hard work, I can tell you, and that wouldn't suit such a lazy-bones. Then you are too big to begin, though you might do for a fat boy if Smithers wanted one" (153). Ben's lower-class relationship to food—one embedded in control and upward social mobility—and disposition toward labour clash with Sam's "lazy" behavior, and Ben frequently exerts masculine authority

over the fat, effeminate boy. Following their confrontation regarding the physical demands of circus performance, Ben and Sam begin to quarrel, and shortly afterward Bab and Betty return from school with news of an altercation between the two boys:

> "Sam didn't like it because Ben jumped farther than he did—"
>
> "And he said Ben ought to be in the poor-house."
>
> "And Ben said he ought to be in a pigpen."
>
> "So he had!—such a greedy thing, bringing lovely big apples, and not giving any one a single bite!"
>
> "Then he was mad, and we all laughed; and he said, 'Want to fight?'"
>
> "And Ben said, 'No, thanky, not much fun in pounding a feather-bed.'"
>
> "Oh, he was awfully mad then, and chased Ben up the big maple." (264-65)

Despite both boys' aggressive behavior and degrading insults, the reader is clearly meant to see Ben as the hero in this situation. He dehumanizes Sam by referring to him as a pig and as a "feather-bed," yet his behavior toward the boy is recognized as heroic. Sander Gilman's work on obesity in the history of Western culture exposes the borderline violent anxiety surrounding obesity throughout the nineteenth century, especially in children.[7] He suggests that with the rise of the middle class in America during the Industrial Revolution, appetite repression shifts from a religious issue to one embedded in class: "Not sin, but middle-class indulgence begins to be seen

[7] This gnawing anxiety surrounding childhood obesity is one that is continues today. My study of childhood eating behaviour in some ways traces a pre-history of a contemporary preoccupation with children's diets. Mark Bittman, for example, writes in his New York Times op-ed about the politics of school lunches and childhood obesity. He argues that while "children should be heard," they should also be "fed well," and he places much of the responsibility on the government, as it is the only "institution big enough to officially resist and respond to the onslaught of industry marketing steadfastly determined to plump the little darlings up with the destructive calories of pizza, burgers, chicken nuggets, breakfast cereals and the other stuff kids learn to eat before they learn to think" (n.p.).

as the force that creates fat boys" (58). Post-bellum American culture works against the seemingly lazy, indulgent fat child, and "[t]he hidden model remains the same: the normal, reasonable man is always contrasted with the fat boy, and always to the latter's detriment. And the reward for the thin man is life, life extended, while the fat man dies young and unhappy" (Gilman 58). While Alcott does not follow up on the status of Sam Kitteredge in adulthood, she also does not insinuate any sort of behavioral reformation on his part, and she leaves her readers to envision for him a failed manhood and early demise.

In Alcott's *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*, Alcott takes the notion of the lazy, universally hated fat boy and pushes it to its limits. The novels follow the boys at Plumfield throughout their childhood and into adulthood, narrating the boys' experiences in learning, playing, and transitioning from "little men" into productive and industrious members of American society. As the novels unfold, the beloved boys pursue the passions they have been developing since the beginning of *Little Men*, and learn meaningful lessons as they ultimately make the transition into manhood: Nat travels across Europe with his violin, and returns home to marry his beloved Daisy; Dan dedicates his life to protecting Native Americans and their land "until he [is] shot defending them"; and Tommy becomes a thriving businessman (*Jo's Boys* 403). Not every boy successfully transitions into conventional manhood, though, as Jo admits, "Some of our boys are failures," and perhaps the most significant "failure" to leave Plumfield is George Cole (*Jo's Boys* 401). George, consistently referred to as "Stuffy" throughout the novels "'cause he eats so much," was "spoilt by an over-indulgent mother, who stuffed him with sweetmeats till he was sick, and then thought him too delicate to study, so that at twelve years old, he was a pale, puffy boy, dull, fretful, and lazy" (*Little Men* 29, 30). Throughout *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*, Stuffy struggles to curb his appetite and eat in moderation, and despite Jo's frequent lessons about the

importance of self-denial in manhood and the health risks associated with over-eating, he remains "the fat one" indefinitely (*Little Men* 13). While each of the other boys abandon their boyish behaviors in order to pursue industrious and, in turn, masculine careers in adulthood, Stuffy refuses to reform his indulgent behavior, and "[becomes] an alderman, and [dies] suddenly of apoplexy after a public dinner" (404). Stuffy's failure as a man and his early demise are consequences of his inability to control his appetite, his disregard for the tenets of muscular Christianity, and his avoidance of physicality and its resulting obesity, and throughout *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*, Stuffy functions as the wretched antithesis of successful industrious manhood.

Remaining industrious and contributing to the household are crucial aspects of life at Plumfield for the boys, and food functions as a means of entering into business for the children. Experimenting with industry and capital, each boy is able to adopt a plot of land, and "[s]everal of the boys were 'in business,' as they called it […] and knowing that they would have their own way to make by and by, the Bhaers encouraged any efforts at independence. Tommy sold his eggs; Jack speculated in livestock […]" (*Little Men* 65). Purchasing eggs, livestock, and crops from the little farmers, Jo and Fritz encourage the boys to take on small business endeavors at low stakes in order to prepare them for their futures as providers. As Ken Parille notes, "male identity in the nineteenth century was intimately connected to work," and conduct manuals for young boys "endorsed typical pre-industrial occupations, such as farmer, craftsman, and shopkeeper" (72, 65). However, male identity was not solely connected to labour, but also to food, the appetite, and embodiment. Hard work is the foundation for ideal masculinity in nineteenth-century America, yet life at Plumfield cultivates industrious attitudes toward food and eating while preparing the male students to transition into manhood. While teaching Nat, the new student, about the farming program at Plumfield, Tommy explains, "beans are ever so much

easier than corn or potatoes. I tried melons last year, but the bugs were a bother, and the old things wouldn't get ripe before the frost, so I didn't have but one good water and two little 'mush mellions" (*Little Men* 48). Rather than thinking of their crops as food sources, the boys adopt an industrious appetite—one that is entrenched in self-denial and hard work—and build a relationship to their crops based on industry and capital. The boys' appetites come to be displaced from food consumption to food production.

The little farmers easily adopt commercial attitudes to their crops as they plant, cultivate, and harvest their fruits and vegetables, but while the others reap the capital rewards of their farms, Stuffy struggles not to eat his crops before harvest. His pervasive hunger and uncurbed appetite make it difficult for him to adopt an industrial relationship to his garden, and his inability to profit from his crops grounds him in perpetual "unmanliness." Whereas each boy is allowed to plant the crop of his choice, Stuffy is forbidden to grow melons: as Tommy explains, "he's got to take peas; they only have to be picked, and he ought to do it, he eats such a lot" (*Little Men* 48). Stuffy's manliness, or lack thereof, is inextricably linked to not only his unwillingness to labour industriously as the other boys do, but most importantly to his unchecked appetite. Kimmel and Parille each point to labour as the primary component of nineteenth century manhood in America, yet Stuffy's experiences of shame in his agricultural endeavors complicate this notion by placing a heavy significance on food, eating behavior, and the appetite in late nineteenth-century functions of American masculinity. By consistently over-eating and "[filling] his little stomach with cake and candy," Stuffy loses the boys' trust among the crops, and he is banished to the occupation of pea farmer (*Little Men* 55). Toward the end of *Little Men*, though, the boys allow Stuffy to take on the challenge of growing cantaloupe and watermelon, and while he does struggle with his voracious appetite throughout the experience, his little farm

ultimately thrives under his care: "Stuffy had various trials with his melons; for, being impatient to taste them, he had a solitary revel before they were ripe, and made himself so ill, that for a day or two it seemed doubtful if he would ever eat any more. But he pulled through it, and served up his first cantaloupe without tasting a mouthful himself" (*Little Men* 368). While he does struggle in the early stages of his farming experience, Stuffy learns a lesson in self-denial and its significance in capital. He develops an industrious appetite—the only appetite compatible with the masculine work ethic entrenched in nineteenth-century representations of manhood—and is able to share his harvest with his peers. While Alcott redeems Stuffy to a certain extent through his success in the garden, his victory is short lived. Despite Stuffy's agricultural success, he remains a marginalized member of the Plumfield community, and his victory is greeted with ridicule from the other boys. Stuffy donates the majority of his melons to Plumfield, planning to sell three to the owner of the neighbouring acreage, but "[g]oing one morning to gaze upon the three fine watermelons which he had kept for the market, Stuffy was horrified to find the word 'PIG' cut in white letters on the green rind, staring at him from every one" (*Little Men* 369). Stuffy's sense of pride in his successful business endeavor is quickly replaced with shame, and he continues to exist as an ostracized other—a character identified only by his obesity and resulting failures as a man.

Shame is a tactic used by both the child and adult characters in *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys* in attempt to reform Stuffy's eating habits. In her work on shame and the fat body, Amy Erdman Farrell explores the ways in which in American culture, "fat is a mark of shame, a stain, something that discredits a person" (18). She makes connections between shame and the fat body that transcend the physicality of obesity, and suggests that shame becomes implicit in fat beginning in the late nineteenth-century, where American culture begins to "[assign] many

meanings to fatness beyond the actual physical trait—that a person is gluttonous, […] or irresponsible and unable to control primitive urges (6). In Alcott's text, Stuffy's inability to control his appetite and, therefore, his inability to conform to the requisites of capitalist American culture, is something of which he is to be ashamed. He is constantly reminded of his material unproductivity and his inability to control his carnal urges, and his lessons from the authority figures at Plumfield are often geared toward shaming Stuffy into embracing "masculine self-denial"—a theme that runs through the entire *Little Women* series (Parille 64). In the eleventh chapter of *Little Men*, upon Laurie's arrival at Plumfield, he distributes personalized cakes to each of the students, sent along by Marmee. The children greet Laurie and the special desserts with great excitement, but as the cakes are distributed, it becomes clear that the personalized treats do not celebrate *all* of the children's individual personalities:

> Then, amid much laughing and fun, the cakes were distributed. A fish for Dan, a fiddle for Nat, a book for Demi, a money for Tommy, a flower for Daisy, a hoop for Nan, […] a star for Emil, who put on airs because he studied astronomy, and, best of all, an omnibus for Franz, whose great delight was to drive the family bus. Stuffy got a fat pig, and the little folks had birds, and cats, and rabbits, with black currant eyes. (219)

While Marmee's cakes praise the individuality of the young students at Plumfield, Stuffy's "fat pig" evokes shame and embarrassment in the company of his peers. While the other children are celebrated for their talents and interests, once again Stuffy is identified solely by his uncontrolled appetite. His identity is based solely on his indulgence and his embodiment—while the novel offers opportunities for Stuffy's character development, Alcott keeps him firmly grounded in status as a negative representation of boyhood with which the other boys constrast. Throughout

both of Alcott's sequels, Stuffy functions as a source of humour for the other children—he is an example of the consequences of lazy, and, therefore, unmanly behavior. Shortly after receiving his embarrassing cake from Marmee, and also following his watermelon fiasco, Stuffy has an unfortunate experience in over-eating that leaves him wondering "why it is that things you eat on the sly hurt you, and don't when you eat them at table" (*Little Men* 413). After privately eating two unusually large cucumbers, Stuffy

> felt very ill, and confided his anguish to Ned, imploring him to do something. Ned good-naturedly recommended a mustard plaster and a hot flat iron to the feet; only in applying these remedies he reversed the order of things, and put the plaster on the feet, the flat iron on the stomach, and poor Stuffy was found in the barn with blistered soles and a scorched jacket. (*Little Men* 413)

Much like his unfortunate experience in the episode with Marmee's cakes, Stuffy's cucumber mishap is "a funny one," according to the narrator, and not only is his unmanly eating behavior punished with illness, but also with physical injury. In this instance, pain is used to reform Stuffy's appetite, and despite his attempts at embodying manhood through consumption of overtly phallic vegetables, his inability to control his appetite strips him of his masculinity.

Stuffy's lessons about self-denial and the dangers of over-indulgence do not go unheeded, and while he ultimately fails to reform his eating behavior, he often approaches Mr. and Mrs. Bhaer for guidance throughout the novels. Stuffy is an unhappy child—he intends to reform his eating behavior, yet his endeavors are ultimate failures. Like his embarrassing experiential lessons, though, Stuffy's direction from his adult caregivers is also embedded in shame. Early in *Little Men*, Stuffy confides in Mr. Bhaer, admitting, "I wish I loved my lessons as much as I do my dinner, but I can't" (54). Here, Stuffy showcases his redemptive qualities; he

understands that he *should* prioritize his studies and his future career over his appetite, but he feels that he just "can't." Stuffy functions as a site of resistance to nineteenth-century heteronormative masculinity, yet his resistance is consistently met with shame and ostracism. Mr. Bhaer, who, throughout all three novels, represents the pinnacle of moral masculinity, reminds Stuffy that his greedy behavior is "bad," and, following the agriculture metaphor that runs through *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*, suggests, "We will plant self-denial, and hoe it and water it, and make it grow so well that next Christmas no one will get ill by eating too much dinner. If you exercise your mind, George, it will get hungry just as your body does" (*Little Men* 54). Mr. Bhaer makes the decision to work with Stuffy in developing healthy eating habits and practicing masculine self-denial, but his project is quickly abandoned and Stuffy continues as a self-indulgent, inactive, and, most prominently, unhappy child. While these traits do not necessarily need to be seen as negatively as Mr. Bhaer suggests, Alcott frames them to be so—Stuffy is a joyless child throughout the novel, and is constantly struggling to come to terms with his indulgent appetite. As his character is reintroduced at the beginning of *Jo's Boys*, which takes place ten years after the events of *Little Men*, the narrator explains that Stuffy "still deserved his name, and was a stout youth with a heavy eye and bilious complexion"[8] (*Jo's Boys* 110). Stuffy fails to adhere to the imperatives of muscular Christianity, as he indulges freely in "too much dinner" and refuses to partake in any form of exercise, and is, in turn, the antithesis of ideal middle-class manhood. After explaining to Jo that his obesity is genetic—"we all grow fat; it's in the family" (301)—Jo loses her patience with Stuffy, and exclaims,

[8] In *The Ten Laws of Health: Or, How Disease is Produced and Prevented* (1885), James Rush Black suggests that regular over-indulgence in "carbonaceous foods" (carbohydrates) results in a "bilous hue of the face" (98). He insists, "Pale, and sallow, with a heavy eye, and tormenting attacks of sick headache, such victims are nearly always wan, weary, and fretful. This bilous hue, oftentimes ornamented in rough, pimply skin, is accompanied with languor, alternate costiveness and relaxation of the bowels, bad taste in mouth, decaying teeth, and irregular appetite" (99).

> "Good beef and oatmeal will repair your tissues […]. Work and plain fare are what you want; and I wish I had you here for a few months out of harm's way. I'd Banting[9] you, and fit you to run without puffing, and get on without four or five meals a day. What an absurd hand that is for a man! You ought to be ashamed of it!" And Mrs Jo caught up the plump fist, with deep dimples at each knuckle, which was fumbling distressfully at the buckle of the belt girt about a waist far too large for a youth of his age. (301)

Jo recommends both a change in diet and a change in activity for Stuffy—his reform is as much about food as it is about labour. Frustrated with Stuffy's laziness, yet still concerned for his health, Jo realizes that he is no longer a child, and brings his manhood into question at the sight of his "absurd hand." Reminiscent of Amy's lecture to Laurie regarding his unmanliness in *Little Women*, where she asks him, "Aren't you ashamed of a hand like that? It's as soft and white as a woman's, and looks as if it never did anything but wear Jouvin's best gloves and pick flowers for ladies," Jo scorns Stuffy for his dimpled, unindustrious hands (*Little Women* 440). As Parille notes, "a physical sign of manliness was roughness, typically visible in a hand that has been shaped by labour," and Stuffy's refusal to partake in hard work identifies him as what Kimmel refers to as a "[man] of soft hands" (70-71; Kimmel qtd. in Parille 71). What is more, here Jo's outburst—aimed at shaming Stuffy for his indolence and gluttony—strongly echoes William Alcott's emphatic warnings against "lazy" youth and their resulting demise:

> A lazy youth becomes a burden to those parents, whom he ought to comfort, if not

[9] William Banting (1796-1878) was an English dietary reformer and the first public figure to actively popularize weight-loss remedies. He openly condemned the moral integrity of obese individuals, and developed strict low-carbohydrate diet plans and exercise routines in order to combat both his own obesity and the growing prominence of obesity in Western society. His methods became so popular that his namesake was often used as a verb in colloquial speech (*ODNB*).

> support. Always aspiring to something higher than he can reach, his life is a life of disappointment and shame. […] Nineteen times out of twenty a premature death awaits him: and, alas! how numerous are the cases in which that death is most miserable, not to say ignominious! (42)

Not only do lazy, overeating youth eventually die miserably, they die "ignominiously"—that is, shamefully and disgracefully (*OED*). Alcott also warns that the lazy youth is destined to spend his life alone, and "if marriage *befall* him, it is a real affliction" (41). "His lot," Alcott suggests, "is a thousand times worse than that of the common laborer" (42). Stuffy's unwillingness to conform to conventions of masculinity, along with his gluttonous appetite, deems him useless not only to himself, but to his parents, a potential wife, and, moreover, to society as a whole. In a culture that bases a man's individual success on his ability to labour, accumulate capital, marry, and maintain an ideal male physique, Stuffy's appetite ordains his social failure: he is the antithesis of idealized nineteenth-century heteronormative America. After Jo scolds him for his indulgent eating habits and "absurd hand," Stuffy does exhibit shame and remorse for his actions, and he begs Jo, "Please make out a wholesome bill of fare, and I'll stick to it, if I can. I am getting stout, and I don't like it; and my liver's torpid, and I have palpitations and headache. Overwork, mother says; but it may be overeating" (302). Jo's plan to "Banting" Stuffy goes unexecuted, though, and while Stuffy does display a willingness to change his eating habits, he leaves Plumfield without any intention to follow through. His refusal to adopt the industrious behavior implicit in nineteenth-century manhood prevents him from asserting any sort of masculinity in his early twenties, while his reluctance to develop an industrious appetite and become "a man and not a meal bag," eventually leads to his "ignominious" death—a shameful demise steeped in a dysfunctional relationship to the appetite—and Stuffy dies "young and

unhappy;" an expected outcome, Gilman suggests, for the conditioned nineteenth-century reader (*Jo's Boys* 302; Gilman 58). While Stuffy does function as a site of resistance to the heteronormative expectations of masculinity that Alcott glorifies throughout these coming-of-age novels, she does not allow him to be successful. Stuffy is shamed for his overactive appetite up until his early demise, and he dies while indulging his deepest shame: while he is eating.

Conclusion: "Reward for his chivalry"

While young men are expected to control their appetites and become conditioned to resist the temptations of indulgence and gluttony, they are also trained to be eaters—the consuming counterparts to female preparers of food. Boys must at all times be enthusiastically willing to devour the fruits of women's labour, just as Laurie does after Jo's disastrous experimentations in the kitchen in *Little Women*. Keeping in mind these complex social expectations, how does one negotiate the boy's hearty appetite with that of the masculine, controlled young man? In her novels and short stories for children, Louisa May Alcott expresses a blatant nostalgia for "old-fashioned" times: a time where women dedicated themselves to feeding the hungry men in their lives, where men were not allowed in the kitchen and women seldom left it. An old fashioned male appetite rarely over-indulged, and preferred wholesome, simple meals to those of the urban bourgeoisie. Thus far in this chapter, I have argued that the controlled, industrious male appetite is a necessary component to successful manhood in nineteenth-century capitalist America, and deviating from this restrained relationship to food and eating is not only a site of emasculation and shame in these boys' and young men's lives, but is also un-American. When resistance to industrial relationships to the appetite arises within these nineteenth-century coming-of-age texts, as Dorry and Stuffy each exhibit, it is met with ridicule, shame, and even death. However,

throughout these texts there emerges a pervasive conflict between these controlled, capitalistic appetites and the expectations for boys and young men to be enthusiastic eaters of meals in the domestic space. This conflict is especially semblant in Alcott's 1881 short story, "An Old Fashioned Thanksgiving," originally published in *St. Nicholas*. In this narrative of food, Alcott creates an ideal rural family whose women and girls remain cooking and serving food in the kitchen, while the men and boys work outdoors, "feed[ing] the cattle and bring[ing] in heaps of wood" (6). While the children's mother and father are away for the evening—a first-time occurrence for the children, whose mother had never been out of the home overnight—the children tell each other stories while shelling nuts around the hearth. While listening to a story about a young man's failure to protect his sister, Seth exclaims that he would "take his father's sword and lay about him," to which Tilly responds, "'You bantam! He was only a bit of a boy, and couldn't do anything. Sit down and hear the rest of it,'[…] with a pat on the yellow head, and a private resolve that Seth should have the largest piece of pie at dinner next day, as reward for his chivalry" (8). Seth's masculine outburst is recognized as behavior that is to be rewarded with food, and creates a rift between the manly controlled appetite and the (old-fashioned) hearty agrarian eater. Laurie, Ben, and Dorry are conditioned to control their hearty boyish appetites in order to grow into successful masculinity, while Seth's hearty appetite is idealized in a rural, agrarian setting. In nineteenth century America, a culture where obesity—particularly in men—is regarded as the downfall of the capital nation, a state of being so deeply shameful that it can result only in unheeded premature death, how do we negotiate these complex, contradictory social expectations regarding the male appetite? Implicit in these nineteenth-century children's coming-of-age texts is the idea that the future of capitalistic America is embedded in young men with controlled appetites—in omnipotent hunger consistently redirected to industrial labour and

capital success—while the image of the lazy, over-eating youth coincides with the unproductive, unmanly, and the un-American.

Chapter 2

"Ice-cream Sundays":

Class and the Collective Food Space in Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna*

At the beginning of *Pollyanna*, Nancy is sent to retrieve Pollyanna from the train station, and, intrigued by the impression that her aunt may be wealthy, Pollyanna asks the young servant, "Does Aunt Polly have ice-cream Sundays?" (20). Pollyanna equates wealth with luxurious foods such as ice cream sundaes, and at this moment, food transcends its role as basic human sustenance and takes on a deeper social meaning. Pollyanna's understanding of socio-economic status is interconnected with aspects of food, and these social aspects of food continually surface throughout the novel. *Pollyanna* is a text that is rather restrained in terms of food. Admittedly, it does not engage with representations of food as overtly as other texts emerging from the period, such as those by Alcott, Coolidge, and Sarah Orne Jewett. But throughout the text food is intertwined with issues of class in early twentieth-century America. *Pollyanna* narrates the experiences of two classes—the upper-middle class and the working poor—yet Pollyanna's ability to cross the boundaries between these two classes allows them to enmesh, blurring the strict hierarchal divisions between rich and poor. The upper and lower class eaters in the novel obviously share vastly different understandings of food and eating, yet while food is used to signal characters' positions within a decidedly hierarchal American society, the wealthy and the poor in *Pollyanna* complicate these connections between food and class by building relationships to food that transcend the boundaries of the class hierarchy that divides them. Pollyanna, who develops close relationships with both upper and lower class characters in the novel, consistently blurs the boundaries of this hierarchy through her ability to transcend and obscure class

divisions, and her own complex class status (as the daughter of a poor minister and adopted niece of a wealthy woman) shapes her attitudes toward food. While hierarchal class boundaries are drawn rigorously throughout Porter's novel—boundaries that are held firmly in place through representations of food and the characters' relationships to it—Pollyanna herself works against social expectations surrounding food appetite, and uses food to create liminal spaces between rich and poor, the upper and lower classes. As a later coming-of-age text, *Pollyanna* emerges from a rich and prolific genre of nineteenth-century fiction, and Pollyanna's experiences of class transcendence in the kitchen and collective eating space parallel those of young female characters in earlier novels—Katy in Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* and Betty Leicester in Sarah Orne Jewett's *Betty Leicester: A Story for Girls*. This chapter explores this deep, complex relationship by analyzing food's impact on the differing classes in the text in terms of memory, eating spaces, class, and the socially-conditioned appetite, as it grounds *Pollyanna* in a rich discourse of food against a nineteenth-century literary backdrop. I argue that as Pollyanna transforms cooking and eating spaces into communal areas that foster meaningful relationships and closely-knit communities, she uses food as a vehicle of class transcendence and blurs the boundaries separating the poor from the wealthy, the servant from the served. However, problems arise in these attempts at deconstructing class boundaries within cooking and eating spaces, and I consider the ways in which upper-middle-class young women's dabbling in the kitchen runs the risk of reinscribing the gulf between the upper and lower classes in the domestic space.

"I don't see how she can help liking ice-cream": Food, Memory, and Familial Relationships

Porter's *Pollyanna* was published toward the end of the golden age of Anglophone

children's literature, and her readers would have been steeped in literary lessons stemming from the popular classics of the period. As an early twentieth-century children's author, Porter was undoubtedly influenced by the legacies of nineteenth-century women writers such as Louisa May Alcott, Coolidge, and Jewett. Much like many of these mid-to-late nineteenth-century texts, issues of food and eating permeate *Pollyanna*, and Porter's novel offers an insightful exploration of food as it interweaves with social behavior. *Pollyanna* invites us to view food not as a perpetuator of social and class boundaries—that is, not as an object of class division, as Alcott frames Amy's pickled limes in *Little Women*—but rather as a means by which the upper and lower classes can share common experience. Furthermore, eating, sharing, and preparing food creates opportunities for pushing the boundaries between public and private spaces. After Pollyanna's discovery that Aunt Polly not only does not have "ice-cream Sundays," but does not actually like ice cream at all, she tells Nancy, "I don't see how she can help liking ice-cream. But— anyhow, I can be kinder glad about that, 'cause the ice-cream you don't eat can't make your stomach ache like Mrs. White's did" (20-21). Aunt Polly's distaste for ice cream is consistent with her unpleasant personality, and Pollyanna's genuine and unfaltering optimism makes this aspect of her aunt's personality completely unfathomable. Upon discovering that Aunt Polly does not share her taste for ice cream, Pollyanna accepts that *she*, herself, will not be eating ice cream in the Harrington household, and the notion of indulging in the luxurious dessert alone does not cross her mind. The term "Ice cream Sundays" takes on dual meanings here—not only is Pollyanna referring to ice cream itself, but she is also alluding to traditional Sunday afternoons, when families take time to be with one another during the day of rest, a ritual with which Pollyanna, a minister's daughter, would be all too familiar. Sweet foods—including ice cream sundaes, encourage camaraderie—are meant to be shared among loved ones in familial

spaces.[10]

While the child reader may be expected to make connections between Aunt Polly's aversion to ice cream and her sour personality, Polly's distaste for sweets runs deeper than her general unpleasantness. Sweet foods are typically a comfort—a luxury meant to evoke pleasure and complement existing happiness. In *Pollyanna*, a novel that, as mentioned previously, is rather constrained when it comes to food, confectionary is rarely mentioned, and when Pollyanna does refer to indulgent foods, such as the fudge and fig cake she has been taught to bake, her embittered aunt scolds her. Discussing the politics of sweetness, Andrew Dix and Lorna Piatti draw connections between sweetness and nostalgia, and suggest that sugar and confectionery summon childhood memories and allow eaters to revisit the past: "sweet foods are conceived as privileged vehicles for the preservation and mobilization of remembrances" (56). This connection between nostalgia and sweets is confirmed throughout the novel—just as Pollyanna makes connections between ice cream Sundays and Mrs. White, the sickly old woman from her life before moving into the Harrington household, Aunt Polly relates the dessert to her own childhood. The food of childhood—beloved, sweet, comforting food—functions as a sort of language of memory, and Aunt Polly's aversion to ice cream and cakes is embedded in her refusal to work through her difficult past. Early in the novel, the narrator reveals that the Harrington family had shunned Jennie, Polly's sister and Pollyanna's mother, after she had rejected a wealthy suitor and run away with a poor minister:

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[10] While I discuss the familial domestic space throughout this chapter, I do not engage a discourse of public and private sphere theory in *Pollyanna*. Porter does foreground a discussion of public and private eating spaces through the character of Mr. Pendleton, who takes his daily meals in a café, but she does not extend the same fluidity in her eating spaces for women in the novel. Pollyanna never eats in public—she may eat in spaces outside of the Harrington household, such as in Mrs. Snow's sickroom and, later, in Mr. Pendleton's, but her eating never takes place in spaces outside of the private sphere.

> The break had come then. Miss Polly remembered it well, though she had been but a girl of fifteen, the youngest, at the time. […] To be sure, Jennie herself had written, for a time, and had named her last baby Pollyanna, for her two sisters, Polly and Anna—the other babies had all died. This had been the last time that Jennie had written (6)

Polly's inability to make peace with her estranged sister and the pain attached to her memory keeps her in a constant state of emotional distress. Her resistance to any sort of confectionary or indulgent food, which may stir up buried memories of her late sister, suggests latent and unresolved trauma—trauma that prevents her from sharing ice cream sundaes on a Sunday afternoon with her niece.

What is more, Pollyanna *herself* evokes memories of Polly's own childhood—a childhood of close sisterhood. As Polly rereads the letter announcing her niece's arrival, "her thoughts [go] back to her sister Jennie," and she reflects on her childhood with her two sisters in the Harrington household (Porter 5). Pollyanna's namesake ignites memories of her sisters and embodies Polly's childhood—a childhood steeped in resentment and broken bonds: "She was forty now, and quite alone in the world. Father, mother, sisters—all were dead" (6). As Pollyanna makes a swift and unexpected appearance in her lonely aunt's life, Polly is forced to reevaluate her identity as a spinster and "sole mistress of the house"—as a lone woman who "[is] not lonely," but who "like[s] being by herself" (Porter 6). This new way of living includes a new way of eating, and Polly's precisely structured food schedule collapses in consequence of Pollyanna's free spirit. Early upon her arrival, Nancy explains to Pollyanna that she is to be at supper by six o'clock and to breakfast at half past seven: "that bell means breakfast—mornin's, […] and other times it means other meals. But it always means that you're ter run like time when

ye hear it, no matter where ye be" (43). An ever-present anxiety in Pollyanna's life with her aunt is Polly's enforcement of these strict mealtime schedules, as any/all deviation from them leads to rigid consequences. In the fourth chapter, Pollyanna is determined to climb a rock at the peak of a large hill and, underestimating the distance to her destination, misses Aunt Polly's scheduled supper. Fifteen minutes after Pollyanna embarks on her climbing adventure, the clock strikes six, and "[a]t precisely the last stroke Nancy [sounds] the bell for supper" (31). For Aunt Polly, Pollyanna's unexplained absence is not so much a cause for concern (as it is for Nancy) as much as it is a nuisance, and Pollyanna's heedless behavior leads to the disruption of Aunt Polly's austere domestic order. By maintaining a structured schedule of not only food and eating but every aspect of domesticity, Polly is able to keep the painful memories of her sisters at bay. Children, though, are disorderly and tumultuous, and as Polly's domestic structure is unable to hold up against her free-spirited young niece, she can no longer squelch her own childhood memories. Pollyanna's deviation from her aunt's eating ordinances draws Polly closer to her own girlhood, steeping her in nostalgia with which she is uncomfortable. As Svetlana Boym suggests, "Nostalgia tantalizes us with its fundamental ambivalence; it is about the repetition of the unrepeatable, materialization of the immaterial" (xvii). Pollyanna, both as a child and as the embodiment of the Harrington sisters, is this "materialization of the immaterial." Polly recognizes her niece as an extension of her self, and having the child in the house forces her to relive her painful past and acknowledge the difficult memories of her sisters. What is more, she must work around the eating habits of a young girl who consistently rejects the social constraints surrounding food and eating behavior.

"No matter where ye be": Pollyanna's Eating Spaces

While Polly regulates eating times in the Harrington household, she also maintains control over appropriate eating spaces for Pollyanna and her servant staff. Throughout *Pollyanna*, meals are eaten indoors, and each meal eaten with Aunt Polly is eaten primarily in the dining room—with the exception, of course, of Pollyanna's punishment supper in the kitchen. After Pollyanna's outdoor adventure causes her to miss the supper bell, Polly informs Nancy, "I told her what time supper was, and now she will have to suffer the consequences. She may as well begin at once to learn to be punctual. When she comes down she may have bread and milk in the kitchen" (31-32). Pollyanna's strict relegation to the private sphere, particularly in matters of food, reinstates the division between the public and private spheres and keeps her activity firmly rooted in the domestic space. Polly works to ensure that Pollyanna's eating takes place strictly within the private sphere, and even while being punished, she is never permitted to eat any food outdoors. Rather, her punishment involves a simple, undecorated meal of bread and milk in a space outside of the dining room but within the confines of the domestic sphere. Martha Ackelsberg and Mary Lyndon Shanley, in their feminist critique of public and private sphere theory, argue that "to think of either 'public' or 'private' as a fixed category is misguided. There is no typology or set of procedures that will allow us to draw a line between public and private that will be appropriate for all times and circumstances" (85). The distinction between the public and the private spheres is fluid and situational, and this fluctuating distinction is microcosmically replicated within the Harrington household. The distinction that surfaces throughout *Pollyanna* is not necessarily that between the public and private spheres, but rather that between the dining room and the kitchen. It is a distinction based on class—the dining room is the space of the upper class and the kitchen is the space for the lower class—though these distinctions hold only for the upper and middle classes. Polly is shocked to discover that not only has Pollyanna enjoyed her

time with Nancy in the kitchen but has *also* enjoyed her meal. Regarding her punishment, Pollyanna explains to her aunt, "I was real glad you did it, Aunt Polly. I like bread and milk, and Nancy too" (39). While Polly expects her niece's temporary displacement from her conventionally suitable eating space—the dining room—to be an unpleasant experience, Pollyanna instead recognizes her punishment as an opportunity to bond with Nancy over a basic, staple meal, and Polly is "confronted with the fact that her punishment was being taken as a special reward of merit" (61). Where she lacks opportunities to build a close relationship with her aunt over shared ice cream or even daily meals in the dining room—during meals Polly often "did not speak, indeed, until the meal was over" (45)—she is able to build a friendship with Nancy over a simple shared meal, and therefore crosses the class boundaries of proper eating spaces in the upper class home.

Polly avoids eating in areas outside of the dining room throughout the novel and, adhering to tradition, leaves the servant staff to adapt the kitchen as their own eating space. Moreover, her reluctance to deviate from the dining room extends outside the home as well. Each week Polly sends food to Mrs. Snow, an impoverished elderly woman in the parish, and while she takes on this charitable duty, she does not actually enter the poor woman's eating space. Mrs. Snow's well-being is an obligation undertaken by the members of the church, and "Miss Polly did her duty by Mrs Snow usually on Thursday afternoons—not personally, but through Nancy" (Porter 65). Polly does not physically contact Mrs. Snow in any circumstance, but rather sends Nancy to donate meals on her behalf. Despite her lack of contact with the impoverished woman and her sickroom-turned-dining area, Polly gains a sense of self-satisfaction through the charitable transactions. In "Charitable (Mis)givings," Monika Elbert explores issues of charitable action in nineteenth-century children's texts, and discusses the

superficiality of giving on the part of the wealthy. She notes that "[f]or the wealthy, this charity helps assuage a guilty conscience, or promises more reward in another realm" (31). Elbert also makes note of the rise of "scientific charity" and the corporatization of charitable organizations toward the end of the nineteenth century, where "the so-called 'friendly visiting' among the poor was conducted by volunteers only and those paid were the staff members who worked in institutional (often government) offices" (22). In the charitable transactions between Polly and Mrs. Snow, Polly is able to gain a sense of satisfaction without ever entering the eating space of the poor, allowing her to remain within the confines of her upper-class home while still feeling that she is feeding the hungry. However, the concept of the "friendly visit" is not totally lost in the charitable transaction between Polly and Mrs. Snow—she maintains a domestic quality to her charity by keeping it an undertaking between households—and Porter works against this notion of scientific charity by maintaining personal relationships between Nancy and Mrs. Snow, and, eventually, between Pollyanna and Mrs. Snow.

While the late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked a period of shift in charitable transactions—one where personal relationships between the givers and receivers were uninvolved at best—Pollyanna works not only to build a meaningful friendship with Mrs. Snow, but also to convert her dingy sick room into a communal food space where meals are shared and class boundaries are dissolved. When Pollyanna learns about Mrs. Snow, she "beg[s] for the privilege" to deliver the calf's-foot jelly, and while she is greeted with ingratitude on Mrs. Snow's part—she informs Pollyanna, "my appetite isn't very good this morning, and I was wanting lamb" (68). She works to transform Mrs. Snow's sickroom into a more comfortable eating space. Rather than simply leaving the donation in the sickroom, Pollyanna "[places] the calf's-foot jelly on the stand and [seats] herself comfortably in the nearest chair" (68). Pollyanna

invites Mrs. Snow to share her mealtime, hoping to establish a relationship with the embittered woman, and food acts a vehicle of friendship between the newly upper-class child and poor elderly woman. Pollyanna transforms the practice of sending food to the sick, a technique adapted to distance the giver from the struggling individual, into a meaningful opportunity to provide meals in a comfortable eating space. She continues working to convert the sickroom into an appropriate eating space, and during her second visit to Mrs. Snow, she "cross[es] to the window and pull[s] up the shade," and "arrange[s] three bowls in a row on the table" (83). Pollyanna's own meal spaces are restricted to the dining room and, if she has misbehaved, the kitchen, and she attempts to make Mrs. Snow's bedroom look more like an upper-class dining room in order to create an appropriate atmosphere based on her own understandings of upper-class eating spaces and mealtime customs. Like Pollyanna, Mrs. Snow has a complex class status, as she is a member of the lower class yet still a member Polly's church, and Pollyanna draws from both her background as a minister's daughter and her aunt's privilege as an upper class woman to build a relationship that transcends hierarchal class divisions. On the surface, Pollyanna and Mrs. Snow represent two distinctive classes—Mrs. Snow being "poor [and] sick" and Pollyanna being the niece of a wealthy woman—yet the two women blur conventional boundaries between rich and poor, subverting orthodox representations of appropriate eating spaces. In Pollyanna's hands, the sickroom functions as a bourgeois dining room in a lower-class environment where the mealtime space is non-existent (65). Before Pollyanna, Nancy simply views her duty to Mrs. Snow as a routine chore—she makes short work of her weekly trip to Mrs. Snow, and asserts that "if folks wa'n't sorry for her there wouldn't a soul go near her from mornin' till night, she's that cantankerous" (65). However, Pollyanna treats her time with Mrs. Snow as an egalitarian social interaction, and rather than simply leaving the food on Mrs. Snow's

bedside table, she creates an eating space that is appropriate for a social experience with which she is accustomed. Lifting the shades to brighten the room, arranging the dishes neatly on the table, and sitting with Mrs. Snow while she eats creates a more appropriate eating space in Pollyanna's eyes, as she converts the sickroom to a dining area with which she is more familiar. In Nancy's hands, the charitable transaction is cursory and impersonal, but in Pollyanna's hands, it is a meaningful social experience.

While Mrs. Snow does belong to the lower class, she is not denied an eating space within the confines of the private sphere, and like the impoverished "cantankerous" woman (65), Nancy must also convert a domestic space into an appropriate eating area. Nancy spends the majority of her time in the kitchen, and therefore immersed in quotidian aspects of food and eating, yet she is not an authoritative figure in terms of food choice and mealtimes in the household. She maintains the closest relationship to food throughout the novel, as she prepares, serves, and cleans up after meals in the kitchen; her connection with food in the domestic cooking space plays a significant role in her social position. While food and kitchen work consumes her life, she does not indulge in the fruits of her labour, and is not welcome to dine in the dining area of the home. Faye Dudden, in her work on serving women in the nineteenth century, notes that "[a]lthough she ate separately, [the working girl] did not enjoy the privileges of privacy. Her food was chosen for her" (195). Nancy is apologetic in the fact that Pollyanna "will have ter have bread and milk in the kitchen with me"[11] (35). Just as the dining room creates possibilities of companionship and meaningful conversation between Polly and Pollyanna—possibilities that, due to Polly's reluctance, are left untapped—its redemptive features are undermined by the fact that Nancy,

[11] It may be significant to note here that throughout *Pollyanna*, Porter ascribes to Nancy a burlesqued, almost distracting accent, yet while her speech is clearly marked with the dialect of the lower class, food items in her vocabulary are not so marked.

who works to ensure the flow of meals to the eating space is uninterrupted, is banished to the kitchen during mealtimes. Nancy's identity as a servant prevents her from not only taking part in shared meals between Polly and Pollyanna, but also in achieving any sort of social mobility; her relationship to food is closely intertwined with her class position. While Nancy is hesitant to inform Pollyanna of her punishment, referring to her as a "[p]oor little lamb," Pollyanna retorts, "Why, I like bread and milk, and I'd like to eat with you, I don't see any trouble about being glad about that" (35). Pollyanna is a newly introduced member of the upper class—she spent the majority of her childhood in the care of her financially struggling father. For her, bread and milk is nostalgic—the sort of food she would have shared with her father. Pollyanna's complex class relationship to the meal allows her to create a space that oversteps the boundaries of class—a space between the prestigious dining room and the deplored kitchen—where she and Nancy can nourish both their bodies and their friendship. Food functions as a vehicle allowing Pollyanna and Nancy to cross the boundaries of class that separate them. Sharing meals offers a means of relating to one another on a level that transcends their differing class identities, and food allows them to move freely between the gulf between the upper and lower classes.

Not only is Polly horrified by her niece's positive attitude toward her punishment, but she is also bewildered by Pollyanna's lack of basic cooking skills. As Pollyanna confesses that she has "only learned chocolate fudge and fig cake," Polly's repulsion toward the sweet, frivolous recipes in Pollyanna's knowledge base is as strong as her distaste for her niece's lack of kitchen experience (50). Pollyanna's learned skills in the kitchen prove to be an asset in *Pollyanna Grows Up*, where Pollyanna's ability to "cook and keep house" enables her aunt to convert their home into a boarding house in order to solve their financial difficulties (*Pollyanna Grows Up* 193). Food plays a crucial role in the inner-workings of the nineteenth-century domestic space,

and the girls in these coming-of-age texts work to find their place within the home by training to become skilled and efficient cooks. As she discusses girls and young women in the media, Susan Bordo notes, "[o]nly occasionally are little girls represented as being *fed*; more often, they (but never little boys) are shown learning how to feed others" (124). This somewhat sweeping claim does not neatly apply to *Pollyanna*—Pollyanna *is* fed in a handful of scenes in the novel, yet Porter primarily frames food as a socially transformative mechanism. Her main concern with food is not necessarily Pollyanna's eating habits, but rather her experiences with food preparation in the kitchen and meal sharing within and outside of the home. Pollyanna faces pressure to become useful in the kitchen and contribute to the household as a preparer of food—after she admits to Aunt Polly that she is only familiar with recipes for chocolate fudge and fig cake, her aunt retorts, "Chocolate fudge and fig cake indeed […] I think we can remedy that very soon" (50). Polly understands Pollyanna's lack of kitchen experience as an inherent flaw in her upbringing, and in order to remedy this problem she schedules cooking lessons in the kitchen with Nancy twice every week to ensure the girl can cook nutritious, hearty meals. Pollyanna, who consistently refrains from voicing complaints throughout the novel, is displeased with her new education arrangements, and exclaims, "Oh but Aunt Polly, Aunt Polly, you haven't left me any time at all just to— to live. […] I mean *living*— doing the things you want to do" (51). Like many of the texts emerging from the genre of nineteenth-century American texts for girls and young women, *Pollyanna* adheres to the tradition that ultimately grounds young female characters in the kitchen. Pollyanna aligns her cooking lessons with non-living—the kitchen and its impending labour represent a sort of death to her childhood. She feels cheated out of childhood activities and is uncomfortable with abandoning her identity as a child in order to prepare for womanhood— an identity steeped in domestic servitude. Although she is initially

uncomfortable with her kitchen duties, Pollyanna soon learns to cherish Wednesday and Saturday afternoons in the kitchen, and both she and Nancy benefit from the cooking experiences. Throughout *Pollyanna*, Nancy is constantly anxious and restless in her domestic duties, and is often portrayed "hurrying with her belated work" (40). Her constant domestic labour is burdensome in her life, in part because she spends the majority of her days in solitude. Nancy Hartsock discusses the alienation of women in the domestic sphere, and argues, "the isolation of women from each other in domestic labour[…] mark[s] the transformation of life into death, the distortion of what could have been creative and communal activity into oppressive toil" (245). The Nancy of Porter's novel participates in domestic labour that isolates her and prevents her from functioning in a healthy community, and in turn extinguishes any possibility of establishing relationships outside her duties. She is isolated in the kitchen, working to create meals appealing to the refined tastes of a class she will never be a part of, and it is not until Pollyanna's arrival that she is able to establish a connection with another young woman. With Pollyanna's biweekly cooking lessons, "Nancy, in the kitchen, fared better. She was not dazed nor exhausted. Wednesdays and Saturdays came to be, indeed, red-letter days to her" (62-63). The two girls build a meaningful relationship during their time in the kitchen, and rather than mechanically working to serve others in the household, Nancy partakes in creative expression through cooking in a female communal environment. Both of the girls benefit from shared experiences in the kitchen, and are able to treat cooking as a creative outlet rather than an enforced burden. Food preparation becomes an opportunity for meaningful, relationship-building experiences in situations when women are able to cook without pressures of satisfying the male appetite. Pollyanna and Nancy are able to transform kitchen labour from "oppressive toil," as Hartsock suggests, into a positive experience based on community and meaningful relationships.

As the young women work alongside one another each Wednesday and Saturday, the arduous kitchen labour that they once abhorred begins to function as an empowering cooperative activity in a closely-knit female community.

Two days each week, the Harrington kitchen becomes a space of blurred class boundaries. Nancy and Pollyanna, as they each take on their respective cooking responsibilities, use food as a liberator—a mechanism by which Nancy is liberated from her lower-class status and becomes supervisor to her young mistress. The relationship that Pollyanna and Nancy create in the kitchen is indeed one that celebrates creativity and female companionship, but it is also one that transcends the class boundaries implicit in the relationship between the servant and the served. Nancy, a working class domestic servant, is suddenly Pollyanna's superior, at least in the kitchen, and, as Kim Cohen suggests in her discussion of servant and class reform in the nineteenth century, "the servant's skill as teacher opens up the possibility for […] hierarchal slippages" (113). Through Polly's constant berating of Nancy, she creates a firm hierarchy in the household—one that identifies the domestic Nancy as a subordinate—but this hierarchy dissolves in the kitchen, where Nancy is the culinary superior and Pollyanna is the student. Porter questions the hierarchal relationship between the mistress and the working girl by creating a space where the hired kitchen worker takes on the roles of teacher and supervisor, and bestows to her a power over the young woman she is hired to serve. Nancy's rank as a domestic servant in America disintegrates while she teaches Pollyanna in the kitchen, and the practical, well-balanced meals they create together epitomize Nancy's brief class liberation. Food in *Pollyanna* functions as an emancipator, blurring the class boundaries implicit in the relationship between Nancy, the servant, and Pollyanna, the served. Although Nancy does not permanently transcend her identity as a lower-class serving girl, food allows her temporarily to break free of her

marginalized identity and become a teacher to a newly upper-class young woman.

Pollyanna and Nancy's egalitarian relationship—a relationship based on food and its preparation—seeps through their own servant-served dynamic and also affects the supervisory relationship between Nancy and Aunt Polly. Toward the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, as the middle class became entrenched in American culture, there emerged a certain expectation in terms of the working relationship between upper-class women and their servants (Stansell 161). Polly's treatment of Nancy is callous, at best, and the resentment between the two women is overtly expressed throughout the novel. Immediately in the first chapter, Polly charges into the kitchen—Nancy's workspace—and while Nancy attempts to finish with the dishes as quickly as possible, Polly chides, "'Nancy'—Miss Polly's voice was very stern now—'when I'm talking to you, I wish you to stop your work and listen to what I have to say.' […] Nancy stifled a sigh. She was wondering if ever in any way she could please this woman" (1-2). Christine Stansell, in her work on women in the American workforce in the late nineteenth century, notes,

> Serving girls were "universally complained of" and "generally and unhesitatingly denounced, even in their very presence [as] pests and curses." In one sense, the servant problem was an element of class-consciousness: One could not really *be* a lady if one did not have a problem with servants. For ladies who were not entirely confident in their own class identity, asserting judgment over the immigrant poor affirmed their position and status. (161)

Pollyanna systematically works against the notion of the servant as pest, as she makes a conscious effort to maintain an egalitarian relationship with Nancy, yet Polly's treatment of the hired kitchen girl entrenches her in the upper-class perception that serving girls are inherently

incompetent. Her constant reprimanding of Nancy and her inability to be pleased with the young cook works to perpetually remind Nancy of her place as a second-class member of the household. While Nancy spends the majority of her time in the kitchen, cooking meals and ensuring the household has proper food on the table daily, Polly consistently reminds her that she has no sort of ownership or status within the walls of the house. As the relationship between Polly and Pollyanna grows, so too does Polly's patience with Nancy; just as Pollyanna is able to break down the class boundaries between herself and Nancy while in the kitchen, she is also able to foreground a more sincere relationship between her aunt and the servant. After Mr. Pendleton, the richest man in town, offers Pollyanna a place in his home, Pollyanna wonders whether or not her aunt would miss her, to which Nancy replies, "Would she miss ye if ye wa'n't here? […] It's little ways she has, that shows how you've been softenin' her up and mellerin' her down—the cat, the dog, *and the way she speaks ter me* […]." (emphasis added, 180). Nancy recognizes that Pollyanna's more liberatory attitude toward food and the social expectations surrounding it creates a liminal space where the boundaries of class no longer exist, and in this liminality Polly grows to treat Nancy with patience and gratitude for her kitchen duties. By transforming the upper-class Harrington household into a space where its members—both the servants and their supervisors—are able to use food in order to deconstruct the hierarchal boundaries that separate them, Porter works against the gulf separating the upper class from the lower and rejects the late nineteenth-century notion of the serving girl as inherently flawed.

"She never expected to like to wash dinner dishes": Liminal Cooking Spaces and Proto-Pollyannas

Writing in the early twentieth century, Eleanor H. Porter would have been undoubtedly

familiar with the works of prominent post-bellum children's writers, and many of these late nineteenth-century authors provide characters that can be used as a sort of benchmark to which Pollyanna can be compared and contrasted. By doing so, I will situate Porter's novel against a backdrop of young women's coming-of-age literature emerging through the period, and create a discourse of food as a mechanism of class transcendence among these novels. Chronologically speaking, *Pollyanna* was published toward the end of the genre under discussion in this thesis—it can be grouped with these late nineteenth-century texts for girls and young women, yet it attempts to offer more progressive prospects for food and its operations in hierarchies of class and gender. Pollyanna's experiences with food and kitchen labour coincide with those of Katy in Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* series and Betty in Sarah Orne Jewett's *Betty Leicester: A Story for Girls*. In *What Katy Did*, Katy struggles to overcome many of the same hardships inflicted upon Pollyanna—Katy's life is severely altered when she breaks her leg on an unstable swing and, like Pollyanna, becomes temporarily paralyzed—and she must learn to contribute to the domestic order of her household from her sickbed. Katy Carr, who "hadn't any Mamma" and whose father is the small town's only physician, takes on the responsibility of planning the family's meals, but unlike Pollyanna, who immerses herself in kitchen labour and deconstructs class boundaries by working with Nancy, Katy takes on the role of house manager and remains distant from Debby, the kitchen maid. After the death of her matriarchal aunt, Katy explains to her father, "I've been thinking over what you were saying last night, about getting somebody to keep the house, you know. And I wish you wouldn't. I wish you would let *me* try. Really and truly, I think I could manage" (176). With her active childhood behind her, Katy longs to enter into adulthood and take control over the household's organization, and Coolidge frames this longing as a natural progression into domestic womanhood. While she cannot enter the kitchen

herself, she yearns to take control of the family's meal preparation from her sickbed. As Katy is in a paralyzed state and in need of frequent rest, her father denies her; however, she is relentless, and reminds him that "Debby and Bridget have been with us so long, that they know all Aunt Izzie's ways, and they're such good women, that all they want is just to be told a little now and then. Now, why couldn't they come up to me when anything is wanted—just as well as to have me go down to them?" (176-77). Rather than becoming directly involved with the staff's domestic rituals, Katy chooses to function as a household supervisor and organizer, telling Debby and Bridget "a little" when it is needed. She takes on a distanced relationship to food production in the home—she does not enter the kitchen to prepare meals for her family, but instead takes control of the kitchen labour from a displaced position. After Izzie's death, Katy and her father expect the domestic order to crumble, as the maids no longer have an authoritative figurehead to guide them, despite their years of routine domestic labour in the Carr home. Supervision and management techniques are learned skills for domestic women with hired help, and Faye Dudden suggests that systematic supervision over domestic employees actually became entrenched in middle-class womanhood:

> Supervision permitted both middle-class and affluent women to forge an accommodation between the work ethic and leisure, to enjoy a measure of luxury and self-indulgence while retaining the moral authority essential to true womanhood. Because domestics were often considered incompetent, supervision was required…Those who supervised domestics often found it a role that offered flattering parallels to the work of entrepreneurial or managerial men. Supervising domestics even seemed to offer a promising field for "missionary" work within the home, because it involved contact between women across class lines. (156)

Supervising servant staff functions as a career within the home, and in taking on the management of the household employees, Katy prepares for the managerial labour involved in middle-class womanhood and, eventually, wifehood. Her position allows her to regulate and contribute to domestic order without actually partaking in any domestic labour, and preserves the social gulf between the upper-middle and working classes. Unlike Pollyanna, Katy maintains a relationship to kitchen labour and the serving women who partake in it that is expected of an upper-class young woman—one that is distanced and, most significantly, hierarchal. Where Pollyanna is able to create communal food spaces based on preparing and sharing meals among both the upper and lower classes in the domestic, Katy's experiences with food preparation and the kitchen staff reinscribe the social conventions that work to keep servants distinctively separate from the served.

In his work on the history of food and cooking, Michael Symons also considers issues of the domestic manager in *What Katy Did*, and suggests that while Katy's abandonment of childhood and entrance into domestic labour reflects a "concept of womanliness [that] promotes resignation," she finds happiness in her managerial position: "Katy finds genuine rewards in serving and routine. She delights in happy surprises, good menus, kind actions, family togetherness" (17). Symons suggests that Katy's removed supervision of the household's cooking staff actually asserts her as a "true economist, both etymologically and historically" (17). He notes that the historical meaning of the word *oikonomia* is "household management," and the original economist managed the "accompts [accounts] of the kingdom" (17). Katy's relationship to food in her household confirms Symons's point—while her position removes her from the inner workings of the kitchen and is strictly managerial, Coolidge asserts Katy as a domestic economist, and her understanding of cooking and kitchen labour is embedded primarily

in order and administration. However, Katy's supervisory tasks soon prove to be insufficient, and despite her initial enthusiasm toward her new household occupation, she soon begins to suffer from ennui: "As soon as breakfast was over, and the dishes were washed and put away, Debby would tie on a clean apron, and come up stairs for orders. At first Katy thought this great fun. But after ordering dinner a good many times, it began to grow tiresome" (178). Unlike Pollyanna, who is both able and willing to partake in kitchen labour alongside the cook, Katy struggles to find enjoyment in her post, and soon regrets her decision to dabble in supervisory household tasks. Her experience in contributing to domestic order is antithetical to that of Pollyanna, and throughout *What Katy Did* there remains a deep divide between the preparers and eaters of the daily meals. Through Katy's experiences with the hired kitchen staff, Coolidge frames a narrative where young women are unable to feel completely satisfied unless they are active members of the domestic rituals of their household. While Katy is originally enthusiastic about her newly instated managerial tasks in the Carr household, her inability to enter the kitchen prevents her from developing the meaningful, boundary-crossing relationship between serving girl and mistress that Porter sanctions, and she remains unsatisfied with her role as the displaced domestic supervisor.

Despite Katy's similar experiences with temporary disability and her desire to contribute to the domestic order of her family's household, she is unable to overstep the social boundaries of her middle-class status and create liminal cooking and eating spaces. "The ideal wife," explains Dudden, "was to be neither a solitary drudge nor a useless butterfly but an active, competent supervisor" (156-57). While Katy develops supervisory skills and, ultimately, prepares for her own future household, Pollyanna aligns herself with the cook and cultivates practical cooking skills. Pollyanna Whittier, whose enthusiasm in the kitchen works to blur the

boundaries between the upper-middle and working classes, more accurately echoes Betty Leicester—the free-spirited and progressive protagonist in Sarah Orne Jewett's 1889 novel *Betty Leicester: A Story for Girls*. Betty, a "girl of fifteen" whose "friends thought [her] good-looking," must spend the summer with her aunts in the small Massachusetts town of Tideshead while her father, a naturalist, studies and explores Alaska (1). Like Pollyanna, Betty feels removed from the Tideshead community as "a newcomer and stranger," until she decides to throw a tea party in her aunt's home (144). Rather than hiring extra kitchen and serving staff in order to accommodate the added labour from the event, Betty and her aunt decide to join Serena and Letty, the two domestic employees, in the party preparations:

> "It is to be a summer-house tea at six o'clock; it is lovely in the garden then. Just as soon as I have helped Serena a little longer, you and I will go to invite everybody. Serena is letting me beat eggs."
>
> It was a great astonishment that Betty should take the serious occasion so lightly. Mary Beck, [Betty's closest friend], would have planned it at least a week beforehand, and have worried and worked and been in despair; but here was Betty as gay as possible, and as for Aunt Barbara and Serena and Letty, they were gay too. It was entirely mysterious. (61-62)

Here, women's relationships to the space of food preparation are in transition. Betty and her aunt take on shares of the kitchen labour, and align themselves with the kitchen labourers as they dissolve the class boundaries dividing them. The Leicester family dynamic is a strange one to their upper-class peers—social gatherings typically involve weeks of supervision, increased staff, and frantic preparation, yet the tea party preparations in Betty's household are a collective and enjoyable experience. Like Pollyanna, both Betty *and* her aunt, an unmarried woman in her early

forties, use collective food labour to deconstruct the social divisions between themselves and the working class servants employed in their home, as they create a familial dynamic rather than a divisive supervisory relationship. As they convert food labour from an obligation of the lower class to a household communal experience, they create a food space entrenched in egalitarian relationships among women. This overstepping of class boundaries of course has its limits—Serena and Letty *are* serving women, and these food-based egalitarian relationships do not emanate outside of the designated food space. However, much like in *Pollyanna*, Jewett uses food as a vehicle by which Betty and the lower class domestic servants are able to blur the boundaries of class that divide them, even if this blurring of boundaries does not transcend the walls of the kitchen.

Jewett died three years before Porter published *Pollyanna*, yet if she had been alive to read Porter's novel, she would undoubtedly recognize obvious similarities between the "glad" protagonist and her own Betty Leicester. The two girls face many of the same obstacles as newcomers in upper-class neighborhoods, and share similar experiences in terms of building relationships with members of the working class based on food and cooking experience rather than class distinction. However, Betty Leicester takes the development of class-transcendent relationships to a more radical level, as she actually reverses the roles of servant and served. Discovering that Serena, the family's cook, must attend to her own family's needs for the day, Betty insists on joining her and, peculiarly, is adamant that she is to prepare and serve dinner to Serena and her sister:

> "Let me begin; oh please let me," said Betty, springing up. She had a sudden delighted instinct that it would be charming to wait upon Serena to-day and sister Sarah, and take her turn at making them comfortable. As quick as

> thought she turned up her skirt and pinned it behind her and said, “What next, if you please, ma'm,” in a funny little tone copied from that of a precise London damsel in Mrs. Duncan's employ, who always amused the family very much.
>
> Sister Sarah was fond of a joke, and to tell the truth this was one of her aching days and she had been dreading to take so many steps. She saw how pleased Betty was with her kind little plan.
>
> “To lay the table and step lively,” she answered, shaking with laughter. (154)

Here, Betty’s experience with meal preparation and the food space is not so much embedded in role redistribution and egalitarian relationships between servants and the women who employ them, but rather in class inversion. Not only does Betty socially align herself with Serena, viewing her more as a companion than an employee, she actually inverts the class hierarchy by serving food to the working class—she curbs her own appetite in order to accommodate those of her temporary superiors, and notes that after having waited until Serena and her sister have eaten to actually partake in the meal herself, “[i]t was delightful to be so hungry” (155). In a culture where it is uncommon for upper-class women to partake in kitchen labour at all, the idea of wealthy young Betty Leicester actually cooking, serving, and cleaning up after a meal for her family’s own servants pushes the boundaries of nineteenth-century class structure, and her inverted class space is an exceptional one.

Betty’s complex food-based relationships to the servant staff also transcend the domestic sphere, as she takes on food labour outside of the home. Just as she aligns herself with the female kitchen staff, Betty also contributes to the outdoor food labour—the area attended by the male labourer, Seth. As Seth embarks on a trip to the mill to tend to the hay crop, he asks Betty, “Want

to come? be pleased to have ye," and Betty enthusiastically boards his wagon and accompanies him on his routine grind (121). Seth is thrilled by the novelty of his young employer's eagerness to learn, and "[h]e was much gratified by [her] company and behaved with great dignity, giving her much information about the hay crop, and how many tons were likely to be cut in this field and the next (121). Discussing his routine labour with Betty, he is filled with "dignity" and takes pride in his work, and Betty familiarizes herself to the labour that is required to feed herself and her family. Seth's pride in his work is contagious, and by the end of Jewett's novel, not only is Betty proud of her skills in the kitchen, but her enthusiasm also has a strong influence on Mary Beck (whom Betty refers to as "Becky"):

> Becky was forced to change her opinion about cooking; she had always disliked to have anything to do with it; it seemed to her a thing to be ignored and concealed in polite society, and yet Betty was openly proud of having had a few cooking-school lessons, and of knowing the right way to do things. […] Betty was always saying how nice it was to know how to do things. She never expected to like to wash dinner dishes, but the time had come […]." (155-56)

Rather than being characterized as drudgery fit for the lower classes, when Betty enters the kitchen food labour becomes meaningful, dignified, and outright enjoyable. For Betty, the kitchen—and, ostensibly, the crop-fields—function as a liminal space that blurs the boundaries of the cooks and the eaters, the servants and the served. However, this blurring of boundaries and its resulting exaltation of food labour runs the risk of problematization when we consider that Betty's perspective is one from the middle class. Kitchen and field work—the labour that guarantees meals for the upper-class family on a daily basis—becomes a sort of novelty when it is infrequently performed by women of the upper classes; food labour is meaningful and

dignified only when it is a novelty.

Katy and Betty share different experiences with food in the household—Katy's work with food is removed from the kitchen and involves distanced supervision, while Betty labours within the walls of the cooking space alongside the kitchen staff. Both of these young women function as forerunners to Pollyanna—their influence shapes Pollyanna's experiences with cooking, and builds a literary background of food and class transcendence. While Katy and Pollyanna each struggle with temporary disability, Pollyanna becomes an involved cook and meal server before losing the use of her legs, while Katy takes on kitchen duties as a supervisory figurehead. Both young women develop skills in regard to running the middle-class household—lessons that prove indispensible especially to Pollyanna, as she and Polly convert the Harrington home into an inn in *Pollyanna Grows Up*—and, as Michael Symons suggests, become young economists in the home. Like Pollyanna, Betty Leicester cooks alongside the servants in her home as she works to create a place for herself in her new surroundings, and she pushes cross-class relationships further by actually reversing the servant-served dynamic and preparing and serving dinner to her household's kitchen staff. These late nineteenth-century proto-Pollyannas set a precedent for industrial womanhood within the home, however their attempts at breaking down the class boundaries between servants and those who employ them are not entirely realized. While skill development in the kitchen does carry with it a sort of pride and dignity in these nineteenth-century young women's lives, this dignity is not necessarily attributed to the working class women who engage with food labour on a daily basis. It is only when middle-class young women enter the kitchen that cooking is transformed into meaningful and "special" experience, and while Porter and Jewett attempt to use food labour as a means of dissolving the boundaries between the upper and lower classes within the domestic space, they ultimately

reinscribe the gulf between the servant and the served by maintaining kitchen labour as a novelty to be taken up at the whims of the middle class. Pollyanna and Betty are able to use food labour as a means of developing meaningful relationships with the working women in their households that penetrate divisions of class, but this temporary class liberation and, in Betty's case, inversion, does not transcend the boundaries of the food space—the working class remains working class, and the servants do not gain any sort of concrete social mobility from the transaction.

Conclusion

Exploring food as an extension of social structure in these texts creates a particular vantage point from which to ground deeper understandings of cultural understandings of food, class, and their relationship to nineteenth-century American society. Pollyanna consistently rejects the social ordinances surrounding food and the appetite, and by upsetting the social order of eating schedules, spaces, and food choices, she changes the ways characters from both the upper and lower classes deal with food and appetite. While Polly understands food as a vehicle of social propriety and attempts to train Pollyanna to have an upper-middle class relationship with food, she must also face food's role in conjuring her painful past while attempting to keep it at bay. Whereas Aunt Polly's eating behavior functions primarily as a social practice, Pollyanna rejects the food rituals of the upper class and builds relationships with Nancy and Mrs. Snow—relationships that rely on shared eating spaces and/or corresponding behaviors surrounding meals and food choice. Each character in *Pollyanna* expresses complex relationships to food, ones that are embedded in class structure in some form or another, but it is Pollyanna who attempts to transcend its boundaries and create a liminal space where food and appetite are not constrained

by social expectations. Pollyanna's own complex class status—being raised by her working class father, yet belonging to a wealthy maternal family—intertwines with her own relationship to food and eating, and she complicates the conventional roles of food in nineteenth-century American culture. However, while Pollyanna uses collective food labour and meal sharing in order to develop relationships with both Nancy and Mrs. Snow, these relationships do not transcend the boundaries of food space. While Pollyanna trains in the kitchen on Wednesdays and Saturdays and becomes dignified through her newly-developed cooking skills, Nancy remains a working-class serving girl without opportunity for social mobility—middle-class women's presence in the kitchen does not necessarily attribute dignity to the food labour performed by the working class. As lower class workingwoman, Nancy's understandings of food are embedded in her marginalized class position, and therefore her attitudes toward preparing, eating, and cleaning up after meals differ greatly from her wealthy mistress. For Nancy, food most often functions as an oppressive force, grounding her in the servant class, and while she is able to temporarily step outside of her lower class identity by passing her skills onto Pollyanna and developing a meaningful relationship with the young girl, she is unable to achieve any sort of permanence in her class transcendence. Pollyanna's sporadic presence in the kitchen, along with her enthusiasm to learn and build a friendship with the cook, creates a liminal space where Pollyanna and Nancy can exist as equals in regard to food and eating, yet this egalitarian relationship remains within the kitchen.

Chapter 3

"The big kitchen was a jolly place":

The Politics of the Feminized Food Space

In the final chapter of Susan Coolidge's *Clover*, the fourth installment of her What Katy Did series, Clover has the opportunity to cook for Geoff Templestowe in her small, humble rental property. As Geoff politely offers to carry the prepared food from the kitchen, she declines and explains, "I'll bring my blazer and cook the oysters here by the fire. I always did like to 'kitch in the dining room'" (284-85). Rather than alienating herself from the comfort of the house's social space—the sitting room hearth—Clover makes use of portable cooking technology to convert the sitting room into a culinary space. Throughout the novel, Clover uses her blazer, a small kerosene-fueled chafing dish, to scramble eggs, prepare cream toast (toasted bread covered in a butter and cream sauce), and blanch oysters while she hosts guests in her small home. There is a sort of utopian promise implicit in this portable cooking technology—it breaks down the walls of the isolated cooking space and allows meal preparation to become a more open, inclusive experience. However, cooking, even in the communal living area, remains primarily women's work. The blazer shifts the site of feminized labor—it allows Clover to breach the boundaries of the kitchen, yet it ultimately redoubles her labour as she is consequently expected to be host, cook, and server at once. As cooking technology began to advance around the beginning of the nineteenth-century, and central hearths began to be replaced with solitary cooking stoves in designated kitchens, cooking became an isolating experience for lower-middle class women and female servants (Tompkins 30). As more homes began to be built with kitchens separate from social spaces, domestic politics began to shift, and women, as primary preparers of

meals, were consigned to isolated cooking spaces within the home. Cooking technology, such as Clover's "blazer," allows women to overstep the boundaries of the designated cooking space, yet meal preparation and service remains grounded in feminine experience. While Clover works against the domestic politics that work to isolate her from the men in the household, her portable cooking stove simply shifts the site of feminized labour.

This chapter explores the kitchen as a feminized space—a domestic spatial issue that arises as nineteenth-century homes begin being built with partitioned cooking spaces separate from the social areas of the home—and the ways in which these late nineteenth-century young women's texts work to rectify the notion of the isolated cooking woman by creating communal, open spaces for cooking and eating. By creating communal cooking spaces for young women to learn and share positive food experiences, authors such as Susan Coolidge, Louisa May Alcott, and Sarah Orne Jewett subvert the notion of the kitchen as the secluded domestic space, yet cooking remains an entirely female experience. What is more, just as Coolidge does with Clover and her portable cook-stove, these authors push the boundaries of the kitchen further by breaking down the walls of the kitchen entirely and idealizing the single-room collective cooking and eating space—perhaps embedding today's "open-concept" homes in feminist enterprise.

The secluded, feminized cooking space begins with the historical influences at work in these late nineteenth-century coming-of-age texts. The growing popularity of the cooking stove in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries coincides with a shift in architectural design, and contemporary homes began to be designed with separate rooms rather than with a single living space surrounding a central hearth or heating stove (Symons 196). The move toward strictly divided domestic spaces resonated with the American bourgeoisie, and became entrenched in basic upper-middle class conventional life. In Michel Foucault's interview with

Jean-Pierre Barou and Michelle Perrot, later entitled "The Eye of Power," Foucault discusses changes in architecture as they reflect technological advancement in the home, and suggests that "everything is spatial" (148). The shift in architectural domestic layout directly affects the working class and inscribes a set of moral values:

> The house remains until the eighteenth century an undifferentiated space. There are rooms: one sleeps, eats, receives visitors in them, it doesn't matter which. Then gradually space becomes specified and functional. […] The working-class family is to be fixed; by assigning it a living space with a room that serves as a kitchen and a dining room, a room for the parents which is the place of procreation, and a room for the children, one prescribes a form of morality for the family. (149)

Separating living space allows social ritual, cooking and eating, and sleep and sexual satisfaction to remain separate, and instills a sort of morality of repression on which the nineteenth-century working class thrives. Kitchens in segregated, confined areas of the home allow men in the home to remain excluded from culinary labour, and keep women and/or servants isolated in their own designated space. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, in her work on race and the eating body in nineteenth-century American literature, suggests that in upper class nineteenth-century homes with cooks and kitchen maids, the kitchen marks a space of class difference—one that parallels stratified nineteenth-century American society (16). However, these class differences are also deeply embedded in gender. Women become isolated in the kitchen, whether they are themselves cooking or whether they are overseeing hired kitchen staff. Rather than preparing, serving, and eating meals in a common space surrounding a central hearth, cooking and eating become separate activities—activities that keep women detached from the social spaces of the home and

curtail their enjoyment of and satisfaction from eating as they are torn between dining and preparing/serving meals. While these authors reject the notion of the kitchen as a secluded space within the home and long for a more collective food experience, the texts are embedded in issues of class and social hierarchy. Where they advocate more progressive attitudes toward gender and the domestic space, they focus primarily on girls and young women belonging to the middle and upper classes, and re-inscribe the social disparity between the "Biddies" who belong in the kitchen and the genteel young women who experiment with cooking both inside and outside of its walls. Authors such as Coolidge, Alcott, and Jewett reminisce through their young-women's texts about single-room living spaces, and express a deep-seated nostalgia for the communal central hearth where food is both cooked and shared—a nostalgia that continues to be entrenched in issues of class difference—and this longing for "old-fashioned," collective food experiences seeps into architectural and aesthetic aspects of the nineteenth-century American home.

"To and fro, from table to hearth": The Hearth and Nostalgia for the Single-Room Living Space

Nineteenth-century women's coming-of-age fiction—both novels and short-stories—are laced with food imagery and dialogues of eating behavior, yet at the same time the authors of these texts often lament the architectural shift of the home related to culinary technological advancement. Michael Symons, as he explores the history of the single-room living space and its implications on food, suggests, "So much starts from the hearth. The simplest dwelling is just one room, with a fire, to which food is brought for preparation and consumption" (195). The hearth is where organized meal preparation and sharing begins, and as fashionable middle-class culture began to take hold of nineteenth-century America, "it began to be hidden at the back or

downstairs, so that it looked tacked on" (196). Nineteenth-century children's authors such as Alcott, Coolidge, and Jewett reject the architectural shift that hides the kitchen from the social areas of the domestic space, and express a nostalgia for the single-room home, pulled together by a central hearth around which the family's cooking, eating, and sleeping took place. Tompkins points to authorial nostalgia for the central hearth. She draws from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1843 essay "Fire Worship," where he laments the "exchange of the open fireplace for the cheerless and ungenial stove," and argues, "[without fire] domestic life, if it may still be termed domestic, will seek its separate corners, and never gather itself into groups" (qtd. in Tompkins 32-33). While Tompkins does use authorial nostalgia for the open hearth in order to understand "the gendered division of labour in the household [as it] was reflected in the house plan," her analysis of food in nineteenth-century literature lies primarily in the body, as she unpacks the politics of food and the mouth throughout history and explores American eating culture as "a technology for reproducing whiteness" (33, 185). Rather than focusing on the eating *body* in these texts, I explore issues of gender in nineteenth-century women's coming-of-age texts as it is manifested through designated eating spaces.

While the modern nineteenth-century home with differential living space was both fashionable and practical in terms of contemporary bourgeois lifestyle, authors of these young women's texts express a deep longing for the collective spaces of the past. Svetlana Boym suggests that "[n]ostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (xiv). She suggests that longing for the ways of the past functions as a means of coping with the rapidly changing present: "At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern

idea of time, the time of history and progress" (xv). Nostalgic literature, then, functions as a means of coping with a rapidly changing and uncontrollable contemporary reality. In the late nineteenth century, Louisa May Alcott saturates her children's fiction with a pervasive longing for what she refers to as "old-fashioned" ways—that is, relationships to food that work against modern attitudes toward cooking and eating which isolate women within the confines of the kitchen. In her Little Women series, Alcott often creates single-room spaces for cooking and sharing meals that cross boundaries of class. As *Little Women* opens, the March sisters agree to share their Christmas breakfast with the Hummels, an impoverished German family living close to the March's neighborhood. Marmee informs the girls that "the oldest boy came to tell [her] they were suffering hunger and cold," and as they enter the home, they find "[a] poor, bare, miserable room it was, with broken windows, no fire, ragged bedclothes, a sick mother, wailing baby, and a group of pale, hungry children cuddled under one old quilt, trying to keep warm" (17). While the Hummels live together in a single-room living space, it is overcrowded with the seven children and, though it does have a central hearth, lacks fuel for a fire. However the March sisters make short work of transforming the small, destitute room into a warm and comfortable living space:

> In a few minutes it really did seem as if kind spirits had been at work there. Hannah, who had carried wood, made a fire, and stopped up the broken panes with old hats and her own cloak. Mrs. March gave the mother tea and gruel, and comforted her with promises of help, while she dressed the little baby as tenderly as if it had been her own. The girls meantime spread the table, set the children round the fire, and fed them like so many hungry birds—laughing, talking, and trying to understand the funny broken English. (17)

By converting the cold, barren room into a warm and inviting eating space, the Marches create an experience reminiscent of the pre-kitchen era—one that allows the middle class Marches to happily share a holiday meal with the poor immigrant Hummels. While Alcott makes her readers consistently aware of the family's foreign status (she emphasizes the family's "funny broken English"), she uses this act of charity on the parts of the March girls in order to create an inviting food space embedded in nostalgia for the single-room home. There are no women cooking alone in a kitchen at the back of this home—the meal preparation, eating, and social rituals each take place, by women, around the fire in the single-room living space—and this collective eating experience harkens back to the communal food experience of the pre-kitchen period.

Alcott creates a similar scene in her 1881 short story, "An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving," but in this narrative the "old-fashioned" home supports a thriving rural American family whose farm allows them to be entirely self-sufficient. The narrative is set "sixty years ago," in the 1820s, and as it opens, the Basset family is preparing for the Thanksgiving feast to take place the following evening. Mrs. Basset, the family's matriarch, is bustling "to and fro, from table to hearth," preparing "a sight of victuals to fill these hungry stomicks [sic]" and "plung[ing] her plump arms into the long bread trough and [kneading] the dough as if a famine were at hand" (2-3). Alcott repeatedly comments on the "big kitchen," which functions both as a cooking space and a dining area, and Mrs. Basset, the hardworking domestic matriarch, contributes to the image of the ideal communal food space. The kitchen, where the four young women in the family help their mother by "busily chopping, pounding spice, and slicing apples" and the two youngest boys shell corn, "was a jolly place just now, for in the great fireplace roared a cheerful fire; on the walls hung garlands of dried apples, onions, and corn; up aloft from the beams shone crook-necked squashes, juicy hams, and dried venison" (1). In the functional old-fashioned kitchen and

dining area, food lines the walls, making even the décor practical, and the cooking activity surrounds and relies upon a roaring fire. There is no cook-stove in the kitchen, therefore the fire functions as the central source of heat and culinary tool. The hearth is equipped with a crane, complete with "black hooks, from which hung the iron teakettle and three-legged pot," and, while cooking a turkey, Prue, one of the older girls, "settle[s] the long spit in the grooves made for it in the tall andirons, and put[s] the dripping pan underneath, for in those days meat was roasted as it should be, not baked in ovens" (13). Just as Alcott expresses nostalgia for the functional single-room cooking and eating space, she also works against the modern cooking techniques arising with technological advancements in the kitchen and idealizes old-fashioned and rustic methods of preparing meals. She is suspicious of the modern cooking technologies and techniques arising near the end of the nineteenth-century that work to remove women from the confines of the kitchen. Alcott seems to be at odds with herself in matters pertaining to food and its preparation—while she is somewhat progressive in her writing of self-sufficient and career-driven women (i.e. Jo in *Little Women*), she consistently laments the loss of the hard-working domestic wife and mother, labouring stoically and constantly in the kitchen.

Alcott's ideal kitchen is an inherently feminine space. Each aspect of the Basset's kitchen and dining space serves a purpose—from the food lining the walls to the "pewter platters, scoured till they shone, with mugs and spoons to match, and a brown jug for cider," to the coarse white table cloth, hand spun from the blue-eyed flax on the farm (16)—and each member of the family contributes to food preparation through tasks that are assigned according to gender. Alcott's ideal old-fashioned food space involves both male and female helping hands, yet the cooking area remains a strictly feminine space. Mr. Basset works on the farm with the boys in the family—aside from the two youngest, who help by sitting at the table and shelling corn and

nuts—and "Mother seldom left home, but ruled her family in the good old-fashioned way. There were no servants, for the little daughters were Mrs. Basset's only maids, and the stout boys helped their father" (5). The inside of the home remains a feminine space, while the surrounding farm is a matter of male responsibility. When Mr. and Mrs. Basset are suddenly called away from home to tend to an ill family member, the boys are instructed to "look after the cattle like [men], and keep up the fires," while the girls are expected to provide meals for themselves and the boys and tend to domestic duties (5). Inside the walls of the Basset home, the boys are expected only to be hungry, as the girls "[roll] up their sleeves, put on their largest aprons, and got out all the spoons, dishes, pots, and pans they could find," and the boys promise to "be starving by five o'clock" (12, 15). The boys enter the kitchen and dining area only as eaters, and never encroach on the feminine cooking space: they feel as though overstepping the boundaries of the kitchen is an "invasion of the sacred" (11), and the Bassets' relationships to food function on gender difference: the men raise the crops and livestock on the farm, while the women convert them into wholesome meals in the kitchen.

The food space is collective—both meal preparation and sharing take place in the kitchen-dining room area, and while the communal food area nourishes meaningful family relationships and undermines the notion of the kitchen as an isolated female space, Alcott maintains a strict division between male and female food labour, along with their respective spaces. The male family members are not welcome to partake in any food preparation in the kitchen, and the magic of cooking is relegated only to the women in the family—a skill passed down only from mother to daughter. Throughout these texts—particularly in Alcott's, as she expresses such an overt longing for "good old-fashioned way[s]" where matriarchs ruled the household from the kitchen—there arises a tension between the inclusive possibilities of the

central food space and the notion of cooking as a woman's domain. Despite the inclusion of boys and men around the hearth, male presence remains unwelcome in the cooking space itself, and these texts continue to feature girls and young women strictly as cooks and boys and young men strictly as eaters in the domestic food space.

"The boys come in as hungry as hunters": The Gendered Eating Space

Single-room eating and living spaces foreground opportunities for community within the domestic sphere, particularly among girls and young women in these texts, and collectively cooking, serving, and sharing meals allows these young cooks to transcend the boundaries of the kitchen—both ideological and physical boundaries—and reject the notion of kitchen labour as an isolating experience. Politically, moving back to a collective space is moving forward for women in the home. Rather than remaining isolated in the confined kitchen, they are able to perform their cooking labour while occupying the communal domestic space. In Sarah Orne Jewett's "Marigold House," first published as a sequel to "My Friend the House Keeper" in *St. Nicholas* in 1878, Nelly Ashford becomes the envy of her peers when her father purchases a playhouse for the garden. Spending each day in the playhouse, baking cakes and throwing dinner parties, the girls learn "much about housekeeping and cooking which they will not forget" (45), and prepare themselves for housewifery while creating strong female relationships in the microcosmic domestic space. Nelly's wealthy Aunt Bessie "used often to come out to the play-house with her painting, and tell stories, and sometimes sing, while the children sewed and took care of dolls" (44). The girls' "fondness for dressmaking," however, "did not last long, and the kitchen proved much more interesting" (44), and with the help of Aunt Bessie, the little housekeepers begin dedicating their afternoons to baking and preparing small meals in Marigold House's cooking

space. Not only do they learn how to prepare meals, they also learn how to keep a hygienic cooking and eating area. They were, we are told,

> required to keep everything tidy about the kitchen, and they soon learned to be orderly; but at first they had a fashion of putting away sticky dishes and forgetting to wash them. Once, Nelly was away for a few days, and when she came back there was blue-mold on some unsuccessful cake she had carefully stored away in the kitchen-closet. (45)

Nelly's mishap with the moldy cake functions as a source of shame for the budding cook and dinner party hostess, and together with the girls she ensures that her workspace consistently exists also as a comfortable and safe eating space. Marigold House offers the girls a space for collective learning and food sharing as it foregrounds cooking and eating experiences based on inclusion and community.

On an afternoon when Nelly's parents were away, she and the other little housekeepers decide to host a "grand dinner-party" much larger than any they had previously undertaken (45). As she begins to collect ingredients and cooking supplies before the arrival of her guests, Nelly rethinks her decision to begin cooking by herself, as her "guests were usually entertained in the kitchen on such an occasion as this, and, indeed, would have felt defrauded if they had not been allowed to help with the cooking" (46). Cooking together is a special activity for these girls, and while Mrs. Ashford does limit the amount of time spent in Marigold House's kitchen in order to prevent "continual feasting" (44), the playhouse functions as a food space free of the constraints of gender and class expectations. On the occasion of their special dinner party, the girls make

> plum-pudding of extra size and superior sweetness and fruitiness, and stoned all the raisins for it, which they commonly omitted to do. Then they undertook to

> make some soup. […] Each took a knife to slice the vegetables. Nobody wished to cut up the onions, for they make one's eyes smart so dreadfully; so they chopped them a little on the outside with a knife, and dropped them in whole. […] There was a great deal of tasting done, but for some time there was no flavor, when they remembered they ought to have pepper and salt, and it is not surprising that they got in altogether too much, so that it was worse than when it had no taste at all. (47)

Although the girls struggle to prepare a satisfactory meal for themselves and ultimately prepare a virtually inedible soup, the dinner party is not a complete failure. Just as the girls sit down to the over-salted meal they have spent the day preparing, they are visited by their first guest—Nelly's wealthy Aunt Bessie disguised as Biddy Sullivan, a hungry Irish woman. Since she is "a clean old woman," Nelly agrees to include Biddy in the dinner party, and the girls spend the rest of the afternoon listening to stories from the kind old woman and ensuring she has enough to eat. While Biddy is reluctant to join the girls at the little table—she exclaims "ain't this the swate little house! Wouldn't I like the mate to it to be restin' me ould bones in! […] Indade, miss, and the likes of me would niver make bould to sit at the same table as yez. Give me a bit of bread in me hand " (49)—the girls insist she join them at the table, and reject the class boundaries to which they have been exposed outside of Marigold House. They become captivated by Biddy, and "by the time the strawberries were served she was quite chattering in the most amusing way […]; in fact, the children thought her one of the most charming persons they had ever seen" (51). For the "little cooks" in Marigold House, sharing meals in the playhouse is not about the food, but rather it is about the sense of community that goes along with sharing a meal in an open, confined cooking and eating space. While this sense of community seems to be comprised of class

relations built on the distribution of spoiled food to an impoverished immigrant woman, holding class distinctions firmly in place, the upper-class girls eat the food alongside Biddy Sullivan and reinforce the fantasy of their class transcendence. Although Marigold house attempts to function as a domestic space transcending the boundaries of class, the girls remain separated from the poor—their efforts to traverse the gulf between the upper class and lower classes are foiled by Aunt Bessie's prank, and they remain safely within the upper crust walls of the collective food space.

A unique aspect of Marigold House is that it functions as a communal cooking and eating space exclusively for girls and young women. There are no male characters in the short story, aside from a single mention of Nelly's wealthy father, and the playhouse remains an entirely female space. Like Jewett in "Marigold House," Louisa May Alcott also creates a play space dedicated to lessons in cooking and proper domestic hygiene in *Little Men*, the second book in her Little Women series, yet this little kitchen in the children's nursery has a strong male presence. Daisy, Demi's twin sister and daughter to Meg and John, has an increasing interest in cooking and frequently asks Asia, the cook, with her meal preparation in the kitchen. Jo takes note of Daisy's budding interest in cooking, and together with Laurie she installs a small yet fully functioning kitchen and dining space in the nursery. She explains to Daisy, "I knew Asia wouldn't let you mess in her kitchen very often, and it wouldn't be safe at this fire up here, so I thought I'd see if I could find a little stove for you, and teach you to cook; that would be fun, and useful too" (86). While the boys attend their lessons, Daisy and Jo practice cooking and baking substantial and nutritious meals in the little kitchen, and Daisy is ecstatic to find that her small kitchen and dining area is both immaculately stocked and as amenable as Asia's kitchen:

> on one side hung and stood all sorts of little pots and pans, gridirons and skillets;

> on the other side a small dinner and tea set; and on the middle part a cooking-stove. Not a tin one, that was of no use, but a real iron stove, big enough to cook for a large family of very hungry dolls. But the best of it was that a real fire burned in it, real steam came out of the nose of the little tea-kettle, and the lid of the little boiler actually danced a jig, the water inside bubbled so hard. […] The box of wood with a hod of charcoal stood near by; just above hung dust-pan, brush and broom; a little market basket was on the low table at which Daisy used to play, and over the back of her little chair hung a white apron with a bib, and a droll mob cap. the sun shone as if it enjoyed the fun. (85)

With the sun shining in the kitchen invitingly—as if a pathetic fallacy approving of Daisy's adherence to nineteenth-century gender convention—Daisy quickly dresses in her apron and mob cap[12] and prepares herself to "cook at the dear stove, and have parties and mess, and sweep, and make fires that truly burn" (85). Daisy is not cooking for "very hungry dolls," however—Jo informs her that her kitchen is not a play space, but a place of learning. Just as the boys learn lessons in math, history, and Latin in the classroom, Daisy must learn useful lessons in cooking and cleaning in her little kitchen. Jo reminds her young niece, "This is to be useful play, I am to help you, and you are to be my cook, so I shall tell you what to do, and show you how. Then we shall have things fit to eat, and you will be really learning how to cook on a small scale" (86). Daisy, who was born with a "housekeeper's soul," happily spends the majority of her time cooking with Jo's supervision in the nursery, and both she and her aunt begin to cherish the time they spend together in the cooking space.

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[12] A mob cap is a type of bonnet commonly worn by women indoors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is designed to keep the hair neatly out of the face during domestic labour (*OED*).

A significant quality of Daisy's "useful play" involves incorporating the boys at Plumfield into her kitchen lessons, and Jo uses the opportunity to encourage good behavior in her young male students. She suggests to Daisy, "We will make your little messes rewards for the good boys, and I don't know one among them who would not like something nice to eat more than almost anything else. If little men are like big ones, good cooking will touch their hearts and soothe their tempers delightfully" (97). Novel and indulgent foods ease young men's seemingly natural short tempers and hard hearts—they are used as behavioral tactics to keep the boys in line—and Daisy does not simply allow her young male peers to take the fruits of her labour as they please. Rather, she organizes small dinner parties for the best-behaved boys and creates opportunities for intimate, communal meals. While Alcott again longs for the "old-fashioned" one-room cooking and eating space through Daisy's nursery kitchen, she does not invite the boys to partake in the cooking lessons. Old-fashioned relationships to food may incorporate boys and men into the kitchen, but they are invited to eat, never to cook—Alcott entrenched in the status quo, and her young characters' relationships to food remain firmly conservative and traditional. Demi, though, upsets gender convention within the kitchen by taking an interest in cooking labour. Daisy takes on even the most complicated recipes at the boys' requests, including "wedding-cake, […] bull's-eye candy; and cabbage soup with herrings and cherries in it" (98), and while Daisy is content to work in the kitchen with only Jo's guidance, "Demi begged so hard to come in and help that he was allowed privileges few visitors enjoy, for he kindled the fire, ran errands, and watched the progress of his supper with intense interest" (99). Demi is the only boy at Plumfield who willingly partakes in labour that supports cooking, and his presence transforms Daisy's kitchen from a female cooking space (and male eating space) to a collective food space based on learning and sharing meals—however, there are limits to this seemingly utopian

collective food space. Demi's help in the kitchen is limited to more technical tasks—keeping the fire burning and fetching ingredients and utensils from the big kitchen—and he does not actually have access to any of the food before it is cooked; he is permitted to observe Daisy's cooking from afar but not to join. Daisy's kitchen, as it is built into the children's nursery, functions as a single-room cooking and eating area—a microcosm of the "old-fashioned" collective domestic space that Alcott consistently idealizes—and it cultivates relationships where women cook and men eat. Demi resists the modern domestic politics that remove him from the confines of the kitchen, but Alcott does not go so far as to allow him to partake in the meal preparation itself. Cooking remains a special skill shared between women in the context of Daisy and her little kitchen, and boys are welcome into the cooking and dining areas only as eaters, never as cooks.

In "The Cooking Class," a short story first published in *St. Nicholas* in 1884, Alcott creates another female cooking space in which she constructs proper relationships between young female cooks and male eaters. Each week, Edith takes part in a cooking challenge with her female peers while struggling to avoid ridicule from the neighborhood boys. The "class" works as an opportunity for the young women to develop experience in the kitchen, despite the fact that the majority of their meals are failures due to their being "fussy" and "elegant" (233-34). The young women refer to their weekly cooking and eating gatherings as a "class"; however, they do not actually cook and learn together, and their meals are solo endeavors: "Six girls belonged to this class, and the rule was for each to bring her contribution and set it on the table prepared to receive them all; then, when the number was complete, the covers were raised, the dishes examined, eaten (if possible), and pronounced upon, the prize being awarded to the best" (237). Edith waits until "she [has] the kitchen to herself, for mamma was out for the day, cook was off duty, and Edith [can] mess to her heart's content" (233). Alone, she chooses her weekly meal

endeavor—in this case, potted pigeons—"in high spirits, for she did not love to cook, yet wished to stand well with the class, some members of which were very ambitious, and now and then succeeded with an elaborate dish, more by luck than skill" (234). For Edith, cooking within the walls of the kitchen is a necessary yet isolating experience involving pressure to "stand well with the class"—both the group of young women in the cooking class and the upper-class status with which they identify—and strenuous labour. Alcott criticizes the complicated and taxing cooking endeavors inculcated in upper-class young women's fashionable society as she exalts the simple and nutritious recipes of the early nineteenth century. As Michael Symons notes, with the rise of *haute cuisine* in the mid nineteenth century, recipes designed for domestic cooking become increasingly complicated, and "esteemed dishes" rely on "the successful following of recipes"—recipes that "become dense and precise" (166). Edith's potted pigeons are daunting. The recipe is complicated and time consuming, and the finished product has a "slight flavor of scorch" (236). What is more, Edith's potted pigeons leave her exhausted, and her fatigue sets in as she plunges into the clean-up process: "'Now I can clear up, and rest a bit. If I ever have to work for a living I won't be a cook,' said Edith, with a sigh of weariness as she washed her dishes, wondering how there could be so many; for no careless Irish girl would have made a greater clutter over this small job than the young lady" (234-35). Alcott reminds the reader that Edith is an upper-class young lady, yet the strenuous kitchen labour created by the complicated and, consequentially, virtually inedible potted pigeons align her with the sloppiness of a "careless" lower-class immigrant woman. At this moment, the fashionable *haute cuisine* sweeping the nineteenth-century American upper class becomes draining, degrading labour, and the result of her frantic and strenuous work in the kitchen is a "burnt mess" (237).

Edith begins to recognize the benefits of "old-fashioned," simple recipes with the arrival

of Patty, her sixteen-year-old cousin from the country "with a fresh, rustic air" (235), who introduces her to staple recipes for "hot biscuit and tea-cake" (237). For the first time, Edith cooks alongside another young woman in the kitchen, and after the popularity of Patty's simple biscuits at the cooking class, the girls decide to take on the complicated task of mince-meat pie for the next week. After a scolding from Edith's mother, who informs the girls that mince pie is "one of the hardest things to make and the most unwholesome when eaten," the girls decide that Edith will take on the brunt of the pie, with Patty's help "about the measuring and weighing," while Patty's main task is the coffee, as she "can't make fancy things" (241-42). While the girls work diligently throughout the week, "Edith's brothers [laugh] at the various failures which appeared at table," and "[jeer] at unfortunate cooks" from afar, because they are prohibited from entering the kitchen or the dining area during the young women's luncheons (242-43). Like Daisy's kitchen in *Little Men*, Alcott keeps the cooking space an entirely female sphere, and denies "gluttonous young men, who adored pie" from participating in meal preparation ("The Cooking Class" 243). However, the young men do (and must, for that matter) enter the eating the space, and their presence in the dining room reveals itself to the horror of the cooking class. On the Saturday of the lunch—the cooking class meal featuring Edith's complicated yet, with the help of Patty, successful mince pie—Florence, "the lunch-giver," impresses her peers with an elaborately-decorated eating space: "[She] had made a posy at each place, put the necessary roll in each artistically folded napkin, and hung the prize from the gas burner,—a large blue satin bag full of the most delicious bonbons money could buy" (243). The girls are horrified, though, when "the covers [are] raised" and "another surprise awaits[s] them": the boys had replaced the identifying labels on each dish, and the "mince-pie was rechristened 'Nightmare,' veal cutlets 'Dyspepsia," escalloped lobster 'Fit,' lemon sherbet 'colic,' coffee 'Palpitation,' and so on"

(244). The young women feel unanimously violated, not only because their cooking is insulted, but also because the boys had encroached on their space—a reservedly feminine food area. Alcott constructs the food space as so closely intertwined with female identity that the young women in this short story feel as though the boys' destruction of their dinner is not only an intrusion on their space, but a violation of them*selves*. The boys upset the seemingly natural order of the domestic space by penetrating its boundaries without invitation.

However, the boys' ridicule functions as a caveat for the young women's cooking expertise—Edith and Patty agree to make dinner for Edith's brothers shortly after the cooking class infraction, and Edith is horrified to learn that her weekly kitchen endeavors have not prepared her in the least for cooking substantial meals for her family. Her mother orders, "No fancy dishes if you please; the boys come in as hungry as hunters, and want a good solid meal; so get something wholesome and plain, and plenty of it," and alongside Patty in the kitchen, Edith learns to cook simple, substantial, and, most importantly, nutritious meals. While earlier in the short story, upon Patty's arrival, Edith was embarrassed by her cousin's rustic cooking methods and preferred to labour over complicated and frivolous recipes, she now recognizes the benefits of "old-fashioned" cooking skills. As she learns alongside Patty in the kitchen, with Edith pretending to "be the mistress and give [her] orders," while Patty pretends to be the cook, "sounds of merriment" can be heard all throughout the house, and Edith prides herself in her newfound skills in "useful cookery" (248, 249). The kitchen remains an entirely gendered space throughout this short story—the young men are never welcome in the cooking space, and they never show any desire to enter it—yet the dining area takes on more complex gender relationships. The female cooks in the cooking class are the only individuals welcome to partake in the luncheons; however, the boys do enter the dining space and, despite the young women's

initial disgust, benefit the cooking class by guiding them toward more "useful" cooking skills. As a means of forgiving their brothers, each young woman in the cooking class agrees to make a nutritious meal for them, and their eagerness to serve wholesome meals to the men in their families reinstate proper relationships between the female cook and the hungry male eater.

As Edith takes on complicated recipes and toils over her genteel concoctions at the beginning of "The Cooking Class," her main concern is creating aesthetically pleasing dishes that suit the upper-class setting in which they are to be served. The aesthetics of food is a crucial responsibility that falls onto the cook. Michael Symons suggests that "cooks use their eyes, ears, touch, and, especially, nose, teeth and tongue, to share. […] We like fairness. Not just through the dishes, cooks conjure harmonious blends out of the social, cultural and physical worlds" (171). However, the requisite of "fairness" in pleasant eating experiences is not limited to food itself, but carries with it a crucial spatial component. Cooking carries with it possibilities for artistic expression—the cook functions as artist by creating beautiful dishes from singular ingredients—and the food must suit its surroundings. In middle-class settings, dining experiences are shaped by their settings, and the appearance of the eating space is every bit as crucial as the food itself. In Coolidge's *Clover*, Clover and her chronically ill brother, Phil, along with his doctor's wife, Mrs. Hope, decide to spend a week on their estranged cousin's ranch, where he lives in a small farmhouse with the British Geoff Templestowe. While her cousin, Clarence, and Geoff are both upper-class gentlemen, Clover is unsurprised by their lack of décor within their small living space:

> There was no lack of comfort, though things were rather rude, and the place had a bare, masculine look. The floor was strewn with coyote and fox skins. Two or three easy-chairs stood around the fireplace, in which, July as it was, a big log

> was blazing. Their covers were shabby and worn; but they looked comfortable and were evidently in constant use. There was not the least attempt at prettiness anywhere. Pipes and books and old newspapers littered the chairs and tables; when an extra seat was needed Clarence simply tipped a great pile of these on to the floor. A gun-rack hung upon the wall, together with sundry long stock-whips and two or three pairs of spurs, and a smell of tobacco pervaded the place. (202)

Without feminine hands to make the small house a comfortable and aesthetically pleasing home, Clarence and Geoff live in the bare, untidy "masculine" space, and eat their meals together on the shabby furniture. The young men's home, while "rather rude," is "comfortable" and appropriate for young male hunters who eat only in each other's presence, however Coolidge passes judgment on the wholly male aesthetic of the room and frames it as an inappropriate space for upper-class dining. The kitchen, which is located in a building separate from the rest of the home, is a distant and untouched area for the young men, as they keep a cook, and unconventionally, their only hired staff is a man. As the visitors sit down to eat with their hosts, "[s]upper [is] brought in by a Chinese cook in pigtails, wooden shoes, and a blue Mother Hubbard, Choo Loo by name. He [is] evidently a good cook, for the corn-bread and fresh mountain trout and the ham and eggs [are] savory to the last degree" (204). Choo Loo, despite being a "good cook," does not brighten the eating space in the home, as he cannot "do what a woman […] can do toward making things pleasant" (208). According to Mrs. Hope and Clover, a male hand cannot replicate a feminine touch, and therefore cannot create an appropriate middle-class eating space. As it cultivates relationships and invites eating into its social space, Clarence and Geoff's small cabin functions as a single-room eating space idealized by these nineteenth-century coming-of-age texts. However, despite the presence of a competent cook, according to

the judgment of the female author the small cabin is not a welcoming or appropriate eating space for the upper-middle-class individuals: the only eating spaces fit for the middle-class are those managed by women. In these texts, creating an aesthetically-appropriate meal space—a space where food can be shared comfortably—requires the decorative eye and willing labour of a woman to convert the "bare, masculine" into the warm, comfortable *feminine* domestic space.

After spending the evening in the young men's chaotic farmhouse, Clover decides to awake before Clarence and Geoff return from their morning hunting trip and rearrange the "large square room […] which served as parlor and dining-room both" before they return (202). When she is sure the men have left, "she [proceeds] to dust and straighten, [sort] out the newspapers, [wipe] the woodwork with a damp cloth, [arrange] the disorderly books, and set the breakfast table. When all this [is] done, there [is] still time to finish her pretty hair in its accustomed coils and waves" (208). Clover's efficient housework prevents her from sacrificing her beauty to her domestic labour, and she, herself, in her "fresh blue muslin, with a ribbon to match in her hair," contributes to the aesthetic improvements in the farmhouse (209). Despite Mrs. Hope's prediction that the men will "probably never know the difference except by a vague sense of improved comfort. Men are dreadfully untidy, as a general thing, when left to themselves, but they like very well to have other people make things neat," Clarence and Geoff are taken aback by their bright, newly decorated home, and look forward to settling for breakfast (207). To the men's surprise, their first meal in the clean, decorated eating space is overtly affected by its surroundings, and "the pleasant look of the room, the little surprises, and the refreshment of seeing new and kindly faces, raised Mr. Templestowe's spirits, and warmed him out of his reserve. He grew cheerful and friendly. Clarence was in uproarious spirits" (209). While their living space is identified as being comfortable prior to Clover's alterations, they recognize the

significance of the feminine aesthetic in the middle-class eating space—eating becomes "cheerful" in a feminized space. The shared meal between the young men and women is made pleasant and "merry" by the feminine aesthetics of the dining-room, and not only is the enjoyment of the food itself improved, but the actual conversation and relationships between the eaters also become more deep and meaningful. For middle-class eaters, dining experiences are not only based on nourishment and the food itself, but are also entrenched in social interaction. The supper shared between the young men and their guests in the messy, unwelcoming parlor the night before stifles conversation and passes without any sort of social interaction, while the breakfast in the "transformation scene" incites meaningful conversation and brings the men closer to their guests, and to the fantasy of heterosexual sociability.

Conclusion: "A nice, well-bred girl, keeping modestly in her place"

In these nineteenth-century young women's texts, the food space—whether it be the kitchen, dining room, or central hearth—functions as a feminine space in which men and boys are permitted only as visitors. In the context of the authors under discussion in this chapter, there are no limitations to these renderings—boys must enter the eating space, of course, but they do so as visitors and, at times, intruders. Alcott, Coolidge, and Jewett succeed in creating communal cooking spaces based on interrelationships and mutual learning, responsibilities in the kitchen are relegated to women only, and they are expected to possess the skills required to please their male eaters. Each text examined in this chapter is a domestic narrative—each young woman learns to cook within the home—yet as dining out become increasingly popular in post-bellum America, women begin to experience cooking and kitchen labour as work removed from the private sphere, in restaurants and cafés. In Alcott's short story, "Grandmamma's Pearls" (1882),

cousins Kitty, Kate, and Catherine—all named for their grandmother—decide to volunteer as kitchen staff at a "very select and fashionable fair." The girls spend the majority of the narrative balancing their upper-class expectations to comport themselves as proper ladies with their claustrophobic desire to remain useful in the public café, and, with their grandmother's influence, they learn to "[keep] modestly in [their] place"—that is removed from the public eye (147). The girls' grandmother attempts to bribe the young women into proper, lady-like behavior with the promise of a "set of pearls," and informs them, "I am old-fashioned, and I do not like to see young girls in so public a place as the *café* of a great fair. […] But I have asked leave to try and keep the young heads from being quite turned, and the young hearts from forgetting the sweet old virtues—modesty, obedience, and self-denial" (145). As the young women "play waiter in dainty costumes of muslin, silk, and lace" among the "well-to-do" who could afford to pay the high price of admission, they learn that adhering to the "sweet old virtues" involves avoiding the public eating space and, in turn, the public eye. When Kate covers her eye-catching hair "under the lace of her cap," Kitty stifles her attention-seeking behavior, and Catherine avoids entering the market area by donating her shopping money to a struggling family, the girls are rewarded with their beloved pearls, and realize that as upper-class young women, keeping in their place means keeping within the home and avoiding "flaunting about in public" (147). The kitchen may be a feminine space—each volunteer in the fair's café is a woman, including the servants in the scullery—but it is also a private space, and, according to Alcott, the public dining space is no place for a proper young lady. While these texts break down the boundaries of the kitchen as a hidden, isolated area of the home, they (re)construct those surrounding gender and the kitchen, and re-inscribe the cooking space as a strictly feminine, private domain—one that is unwelcoming of male influence but fueled by their appetites. Upper-middle class girls and young

women like Clover, Edith, Nelly, and Daisy learn to cook nutritious and substantial meals for the men in their lives while maintaining cooking as a useful, collective female experience.

Conclusion

Throughout these nineteenth-century children's texts, food functions as a cultural marker of how children are socialized, gendered, and situated in class status, and spaces of preparing and sharing meals work to complicate operations of class at work within the domestic sphere. The development of social relationships to food, eating, and the appetite is a pivotal requisite of American adulthood, and these relationships are entrenched in extensions of class and gender. As I discuss in the introductory section of this thesis, Louisa May Alcott deviates from her emblematic literary domestic space in her short-story "The Candy Country," but like each of the female characters throughout her oeuvre, Lily eventually finds her place in the kitchen. Soon after her fit of dyspeptic crossness in her last days in the land of the "lazy Bonbons," Ginger Snap scolds Lily for her immoderate eating habits and informs her, "Ladies' fingers will do for babies, but pound [cake] has too much butter ever to be healthy. Let it alone, and eat cookies or seed-cakes, my dear" (19). This lesson, while an invaluable one in the text, prepares Lily for a more important learning experience—her abandonment of over-indulgence and her development of cooking skills. After Lily's health and temperament are restored, she takes an interest in cooking, and informs Ginger Snap, "I feel better already, and mean to learn all I can. Mamma will be so pleased if I can make good bread when I go home. She is rather old-fashioned, and likes me to be a nice housekeeper. I didn't think bread interesting then, but I do now" (22). Her experience in the Candy Land squelched any resentment she held toward the old-fashioned womanhood that Alcott idealizes, and her reformation takes root in the kitchen. She begins with gingerbread, and rather than learning from Ginger Snap or any of the bread people in Bread Land, she learns alone by making use of the kitchen's magic: "It was not hard; for when she was going to make a mistake a spark flew out of the fire and burnt her in time to remind her to look at

the receipt" (20). Lily's experience is not one that is embedded in a meaningful relationship between women—she is trained neither by a mother figure nor a trusted family cook—but is instead disciplined by her stove, the heart of the house. While Lily spends the majority of her experience in the Candy Country removed from the home as she explores new territories and tastes new foods, she eventually curtails her appetite and comes to terms with her destiny as a "nice housekeeper." Like Jo, Pollyanna, Katy, Clover, Betty, and Edith, Lily takes her place in the kitchen and dedicates herself to developing her skills in cooking wholesome meals for her future family. These young female characters are not isolated in confined kitchens within their homes—their authors value the "old-fashioned" idea of the kitchen as a social space, open to the company of the rest of the household—yet they are firmly grounded in their responsibilities as preparers of food. For nineteenth-century girls and young women, to be a good woman is to be a good cook.

Each of the children's texts I have explored in this thesis share a common conclusion: the young female characters take their place in the kitchen, whether as cooks or as supervisors to cooking staff.[13] The young male characters in these stories, if any, learn to control their appetites and become industrious, successful members of capital America—with the exception, of course, being Stuffy, whose refusal to adhere to social expectations surrounding his appetite leads to his unhappy life and untimely death. While Alcott, Porter, Coolidge, and Jewett each reject the notion of the isolated woman in the secluded cooking space, their young female characters remain grounded in kitchen responsibilities. In these nineteenth-century American children's

[13] I discuss gendered space and even class space in these novels and short stories, yet I do not necessarily engage in discourse regarding the fact that these *are* children's texts; I do not address the space of childhood—a generational space—in these texts. Because I am engaging with food in coming-of-age literature, I am working within a formative space where girls transition into women, and while there are spaces in these texts where children are free to be children, this freedom does not extend to food relationships.

texts, growing into womanhood involves happily learning to cook and serve meals for brothers and future husbands and sons. These novels and short-stories are embedded in class, as characters learn to interact and develop appropriate relationships with "Biddies" and "Nancies" in the kitchen and negotiate their own appetites based on the social influences acting upon them, yet it becomes problematic to look at the relationship between food and class in these texts without keeping in mind their intersectionalities with issues of gender. In *Little Men*, Daisy and Demi are both members of the same middle-class family, yet they learn distinct lessons about food and take on vastly different relationships to their own appetites: Daisy cooks, Demi eats. While Daisy and Demi's relationships to food differ from Ben's in *Under the Lilacs*, who struggles to eat one meal per day before being adopted by the Mosses, Demi and Ben share more similar experiences in the development of their appetites than do Demi and Daisy. Demi and Ben, despite their class differences, each aim to develop controlled, industrious appetites that coincide with successful masculinity in nineteenth-century American culture, while Daisy works to become a skilled and resourceful cook. Jo, Daisy, Katy, Pollyanna, and Betty learn to control their own appetites—that is, adhere to expectations regarding appropriate foods, manners, and times of and for eating—as they plan, prepare, and serve meals to the male eaters in their lives, while Laurie, Demi, Ben, and Dorry work to control their own indulgent appetites as they grow into successful young capitalists.

This thesis explores the means by which nineteenth-century American girls and young women develop relationships to food that ultimately ground them in the kitchen and dining space, while boys and young men are expected to take control of their indulgent appetites in order to grow into socially-conditioned American manhood. However, there are conflicts embedded in these idealistic relationships to food that linger throughout my analyses.

Throughout her children's oeuvre, particularly in the texts addressed in this thesis, Louisa May Alcott exhibits a deep nostalgia for the "old-fashioned" ways of cooking, eating, and relating to food and the appetite. She solves the problem of the over-indulgent, perpetually hungry child by harkening back to old-fashioned relationships to food entrenched in the dynamic where women cook and men eat. How, though, do these boys and young men reconcile the modern nineteenth-century Western expectation to develop controlled appetites conducive to American manhood and muscular Christianity with the old-fashioned, agrarian appetite that situates men as voracious eaters? Tensions arise throughout Alcott's work between the controlled, capitalistic male appetite and the hearty agrarian one, and her young male characters are left struggling to come to terms with conflicting social forces acting upon their relationships to food, eating, and the women that prepare their meals. What remains constant, though, in both old-fashioned and modern nineteenth-century relationships to food, is the kitchen as the woman's place. Alcott, Coolidge, Porter, and Jewett each frame the kitchen as a collective space where women, but never men, teach, learn, and share food experience, and while they reject the architectural shifts that consign women to isolated cooking spaces by keeping the kitchen open to the rest of the household, boys and men are never welcomed to take part in any cooking. Alone, cooking and serving meals—particularly those that are complicated, expensive, and extravagant—is a stressful and exhausting experience, yet when these girls and young women take on cooking responsibilities collectively, they become pleasant and meaningful rites of passage. Preparing, serving, and eating food are social practices in these texts, and exploring food as an active component of gender and class ritual in nineteenth-century America helps to interpret the ways in which young men and women are shaped by complex social influences acting upon their appetites and foodways.

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