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Little Geographies: Children's Literature and Local Place

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Katharine Simons Slater

Committee in charge:

Professor Seth Lerer, Chair
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Rosemary George
Professor Rebecca Plant
Professor Nicole Tonkovich

2013

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The Dissertation of Katharine Simons Slater is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

DEDICATION

To my grandmother, Elizabette “Betty” Slater, who taught me the value of excellent work sustained over a life that spanned ninety-six years. Her ethics, resourcefulness, and resilience are a continual inspiration.

EPIGRAPH

“Before giving the history of any country, I tell the reader where it is; I give him a sketch of its present condition; I direct his attention to its place on the map, and ask him to observe its position in relation to other places . . . Thus it will be seen that I have made Geography the basis of History.”

Samuel Griswold Goodrich

“Children are . . . at heart the most confirmed regionalists. What they like as background for a story is an explicit, well-mapped strip of country, as intensively lived into as any healthy child lives into his own neighborhood.”

Mary Austin

“The words are maps.”

Adrienne Rich

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Epigraph.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Acknowledgments.....	viii
Vita.....	xi
Abstract of the Dissertation.....	xii
Introduction: Little Geographies: Children’s Literature and Local Place.....	1
Chapter 1: The Matter with Kansas: L. Frank Baum, Hamlin Garland, and the Local Color of <i>Oz</i>	42
Chapter 2: “Of an order entirely new”: Translocality, Dialect, and <i>The Secret Garden</i>	102
Chapter 3: A Pioneer and an American: <i>Little House on the Prairie</i> , <i>Caddie Woodlawn</i> , Regionalism, and Nationalism.....	150
Chapter 4: “Apt to be on any floor at any time”: Localities in New York City Children’s Fiction.....	216
Conclusion: Oh, the Places You’ll Go! Bridging Children’s Literature and Children’s Geographies.....	270
Bibliography.....	282

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Tin Man Reads, <i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i>	73
Figure 2: Dorothy in Kansas, <i>Oz</i>	75
Figure 3: Uncle Henry, Dorothy, and Aunt Em, <i>Oz</i>	76
Figure 4: “‘I was only made yesterday,’ said the Scarecrow,” <i>Oz</i>	95

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The unfailing and tireless efforts of my chair, Seth Lerer, have been key to the completion of this dissertation. I owe more than I can say both professionally and personally to our conversations over the last three years, which were always intellectually stimulating and universally enjoyable. His unflagging faith in me and my abilities propelled this project from prospectus to defense. My tremendous appreciation is not

only for his insight, his perspective, his knowledge, and his time, but for his humor and his enormous kindness.

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Chapter 2, in part, has been submitted for publication in the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. The dissertation author was the sole researcher and author of this paper.

Chapter 3, in part, has been submitted for publication in *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*. The dissertation author was the sole researcher and author of this paper.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Little Geographies: Children's Literature and Local Place

by

Katharine Simons Slater

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

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Professor Seth Lerer, Chair

This dissertation explores the intersections of twentieth-century U.S. children's literature, regional place, and local place. I argue that child characters in major works for children become social actors through engagement with their immediate environments. Formations of childhood and place in these novels are co-constructive; child characters influence the sociospatial development of their locations just as much as their locations influence the sociospatial development of child characters. Yet despite the narrative of accrued agency in these texts, child characters' actions have important limits that complicate a linear reading of passivity to agency. The convergence of childhood and locality in children's literature mutually addresses two cultural concerns among twentieth-century U.S. adults: the perceived disappearance of the local and the perceived

disappearance of childhood. Children's literature that fixes child characters in accessible environments ensures that both the imagined child and the imagined local survive.

In this project, I look at six children's texts, showing how these books' productions of local place indicate that U.S. regionalist fiction finds a home in writing for children well into the twentieth century. These children's texts fall into four categories, each defying standard critical assumptions regarding regional literature's practices. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a work of high fantasy for children, harnesses itself to the writings of Hamlin Garland, employing a regional sensibility in its production of local color and colorful locales. Although *The Secret Garden* takes place in England, Frances Hodgson Burnett uses familiar tropes of U.S. regional fiction to manufacture the locality of Yorkshire, participating in a translocal formation of place. *Little House on the Prairie* and *Caddie Woodlawn* use nostalgia and communal belonging to build regional environments that reinforce nationalist paradigms. New York City children's fiction *Eloise*, *Harriet the Spy*, and *The Planet of Junior Brown* offer opportunities for their child characters to construct local environments largely without interference from adults. Finally, I acknowledge the significance of interdisciplinarity to studies of children's literature, and consider how the book version of this dissertation will incorporate research from the field of human geographies in its analysis of place in writing for children.

Introduction:

Little Geographies: Children's Literature and Local Place

For such a diminutive word in both length and denotation, *little* has a far reach. It often conjures a sense of snugness when applied to place: the little house on the prairie, the little town on the old County Down. The word also summons the relative smallness of the young child, whose size is one of the major markers of difference that distinguish children from adults. Little always implicates a kind of subjective value, used in ways sometimes patronizing (“too little to understand,” “it’s just a little backwater”), sometimes idealized (“beautiful little girl,” “perfect little getaway”), often intensely emotional. Carolyn Steedman reflects on the power of *little* as part of her extensive study on childhood and interiority. “Sometimes,” she observes, “it seemed to me that what I was really describing [instead of childhood] was *littleness* itself, and the complex register of affect that has been invested in the world ‘little.’ . . . [The] way in which ‘little’ and ‘little one’ *move* cannot be undone” (5). I use little in the title of this project because, as Steedman implies, *little* as a concept invites a host of assumptions, ideologies, feelings, and histories inextricable from constructions of childhood and geographic place. Little “moves” because it is the locus of multiple paradoxical cultural investments, always working and never satisfied. To be little as a child is to incur a cultural construction of the juvenile self as vulnerable, susceptible, historical. To be little as a place is to invite contingency, vulnerability, the nostalgia-drenched histories of accessible enclaves. To be little is always to be understood in contrast with what’s bigger or big: the adult, the nation, the globe. To be little is, by definition, to invite the ghost of the large.

In this dissertation, I explore constructs of “little” things—childhood, children’s literature, regional place, and local place—that nevertheless defy conservative definitions of little, summoning a large army of signifiers and operating simultaneously at local, regional, national, and global levels. These little geographies are no less dynamic, unstable, or provocative for their littleness. Rather, *little* gives us an important lens through which to read the performance of place in twentieth-century U.S. children’s literature, as a process that occurs at the micro and macro scale, oscillating endlessly between positions, ideologies, and desires. Child characters in the works I explore here become social actors specifically through their engagement with local place, in the process influencing the sociospatial formation of these localities. Childhood and place in children’s literature are therefore co-constructed processes. Yet despite the narrative of accrued agency and access to localities so common to U.S. children’s literature in the twentieth century, child activity in these texts has a broader context that complicates a unidirectional reading. As the nineteenth century slid into the twentieth, cultural understandings of childhood in the U.S. became increasingly associated with loss, on both psychological and physiological levels. The idea of the “lost child” within gained currency with the advent of Sigmund Freud’s popular psychoanalytic theories, and models of child development pointed towards a narrative of loss, where each day the child survived, she became a little less childlike and a little more adult. Similarly, discourses around local place at the turn of the century trended towards a similar story of disappearance. The rapid increases in technology and human mobility meant that persons in the U.S. came to see isolated localities and regions as more permeable, less idiosyncratic. The child is lost, the local wanes, and in children’s literature we find the

convergence of adult anxieties around both. Placing children in local, defined, and accessible environments mutually mollifies adult concerns that neither exist. The texts I examine in the following chapters contain child characters who gain agency through their interactions with localities and regional formations, but these characters are the provenance of adult writers and illustrators who reflect, through their establishment of careful detail and commitment to childishness, a vested cultural interest in accessibility. The local survives, and the child is not lost, because we know—with precise detail—where the child is.

I begin my study of children's literature and local place at the beginning of the twentieth century with the claim that major texts for children increasingly and exponentially demonstrated an investment in locality during this time period. These works are by no means limited to the ones I examine here.¹ However, by beginning in 1900 with the publication of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, I neglect two important regional works of children's literature published in the nineteenth century: Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868-69) and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).² *Little Women*, unfolding as a site of struggle between the female self, family, and heteronormativity, espouses many of the concerns of nineteenth-century American women's regionalism as detailed by Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse. Like other

¹ Twentieth-century U.S. children's literature with a defined sense of regionality and/or locality includes *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903), *Understood Betsy* (1916), *Raggedy Ann* (1918), the Lois Lenski regional series (1940s), *Stuart Little* (1945), *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (1955), *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961), *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967), and *Miss Rumphius* (1982), among many, many others.

² *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, published in 1876, is also children's regionalism, but *Huck* is far more interested in discourses of mobility, exchanges between stranger/native, and other significant tropes that define literary regional fiction. I will refrain from attempting to identify the very first U.S. regional or local texts for children, since both terms are by definition highly subjective, but there is a case to be made for the seventeenth-century *New England Primer*.

women in regional fiction, the teenage Jo March is “able to say things that do not conform to the dominant culture and still survive” (Fetterley and Pryse 144-45). While the New England town in which *Little Women* is set does not have a name, the politics and ideals of the novel are clearly and famously derived from the Transcendentalist movement, itself a regional production. *Huck Finn* is equally bound to the region, although in dynamic and unsettled ways, resisting rootedness while remaining engaged with local distinctions. Robert Jackson argues that like Missouri itself, Twain’s treatment of regional identification lacks easy classification. The region depicted in *Huck Finn* is simultaneously a product of Twain’s personal history with Missouri and his efforts to bring regionality into literary comprehension of U.S. nationalism. Both of these novels perform regionalist and local concerns in ways that appeal nationally, exploring anxieties of loss, maturation, and environment that set the stage for U.S. regional children’s fiction in the twentieth century. It is no accident that more than half of the books I cover in these pages—*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Secret Garden*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Caddie Woodlawn*—have significant and explicit roots in the nineteenth century. Labeling this project solely as twentieth-century denies the very real flows of memory and nostalgia that recall, again and again, the histories of place production and their relevance across decades. Twain’s mobile regionalism, for example, has much in common with the mobile regionalism of Frances Hodgson Burnett, who published the Yorkshire-set novel *The Secret Garden* in 1911, and whose early writing—contemporary with Twain—was almost exclusively U.S. regional fiction. Alcott and Twain remind us that the roots of U.S. regional children’s fiction are temporal as well as geographic, that time is always a kind of space.

The boundaries of this dissertation are necessarily artificial. Children’s regional and local fiction existed before 1900, and children’s regional and local fiction exists beyond the publication of *The Planet of Junior Brown* in 1971, the most recent novel I examine in these pages.³ Although I have organized these chapters chronologically, with the acknowledgement that historical context has significant relevance to the production of place-based literature for children, each chapter demonstrates how children’s regional fiction showcases regionalism’s provocative multiplicity: by pushing boundaries of genre, scale, time, and the urban/rural divide. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* establishes that regional fiction is not firmly or irrevocably wedded to the genre of realism; that “regionalism” and “fantasy” are concepts that can co-exist without dismantling the other. *The Secret Garden*, a regional novel set in Northern England, is a hybridized translocal text, a production of multiple transnational localities, including Frances Hodgson Burnett’s 1870s Appalachian regional fiction, indicating that regionalism can and does operate on a global level. *Little House on the Prairie* and *Caddie Woodlawn*, both published in 1935, reach back into the 1860s to produce a regional space that depends as much on the dynamic production of nostalgia for children as on the nationalist ideologies they both espouse. *Eloise*, *Harriet the Spy*, and *The Planet of Junior Brown* are New York City-based texts that would seem to self-exclude from regionalist readings, but their formations of place and space demonstrate that the local is possible—even inevitable—in urban settings. Just as recent scholarship by Krista Comer, Tom Lutz, and Neil Campbell seeks to push the boundaries of what we consider regionalism and/or local color to be,

³ Local children’s fiction continues to be popular well into the twenty-first century. Matt de la Peña’s award-winning *Mexican Whiteboy* (2008), set in National City on the San Diego/Tijuana border, explores the liminality of mixed-race identity within the liminality of the localized border space.

my selection of these texts is designed to show that children's regional and local color fiction radically dismantles conservative understandings of regional literature as yoked to insular provincialism. If literature is defined in part by the presence of unreconciled elements—formal, contextual, or paratextual—then these texts are literary because they refuse easy borders or definitions. Instead, they manufacture a space where conflicting anxieties, pleasures, and desires collide without amalgamation.

Childhood, Children's Literature, and the Adult

Childhood in both literature and lived practice is a contested site, the product of a series of ongoing negotiations between adults and children. Like any socially constructed label, "childhood" and "children's literature" resist easy definition, and perceptions of those categories shift depending on the perspective applied. In 1960, archivist and amateur historian Philippe Ariés published his work *L'Enfant et La Vie Familiale Sous L'Ancien Regime*, retitled and translated as *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, the first scholarly work to argue for childhood as a constructed concept rather than biologically "natural." Ariés claimed that the idea of childhood only emerged during the seventeenth century; that previously, adults viewed children as "adults in the making, [not] as separate individuals forming part of a distinct social/age group" (Gittins 28). Literary critic and historicists, particularly those who focus on medieval or early modern cultures, have consistently critiqued Ariés and his theories since the publication of *Centuries of Childhood*. Ariés's methodology is somewhat suspect; he uses aesthetic objects as primary evidence for an historical argument. J.L. Nelson, in "Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages," critiques Ariés for reading the Middle Ages

in homogeneous ways that fail to account for the presence of considerable evidence—medical treatises in particular—indicating adults acknowledged children as having “specific characteristics and needs” (Nelson 82).⁴ Despite this and other important criticisms, Ariés’s work nevertheless remains significant because its basic tenets form the foundation of childhood studies in history, sociology, geography, and literature: children and childhood are shifting concepts and categories that depend as much or more on social and historical concepts as biological ones. These constructions of childhood shift greatly depending on their context. Besides Ariés’s theory of the medieval and early modern child as miniature adult, some significant Western models include the blank slate Romantic child as promoted by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who is innocence personified; the sinful child born in need of discipline; the working child, whose labor provided the backbone of U.S. and British economies until the twentieth century; the psychologically and physiologically developing child, always growing out of childhood, theorized primarily by Jean Piaget and Sigmund Freud; and the sacred child in need of protection and coddling, a model that survives and thrives today.

Although scholars in the humanities and social sciences agree broadly that childhood is a socially constructed identity, debates continue over the extent to which adults and children participate in this process of construction. Historically, these debates have been fairly pessimistic to the point of excluding children, particularly within the

⁴ As Diana Gittins points out, Ariés’s theory is based in large part on what he perceives to be the absence of child representations in medieval art. There are, however, a number of sources that show how children interacted with printed manuscripts prior to the seventeenth century in ways that gesture towards a recognizable “child” category, through manufacturing a space of play. In his recent exploration of children’s marginalia, Seth Lerer records examples from the beginning of the sixteenth century. A page of the Helmingham Manuscript of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* contains a scribble at the top reading “Franses copper ded play in the chirch ha[re].” Another, on the bottom of the last page of the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*: “Jhon hyam ded play with a knif on hise foryde with the poynte” (Lerer 131).

field of children's literature scholarship. In 1984, Jacqueline Rose famously argued that children's literature was "impossible," a genre constructed by adults to fulfill and serve adult desires, involving no "real" child at all. Rather than attempt to communicate child emotions or experiences, children's literature universally voices adult fantasies of control: "If children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp" (2). Like the work of Ariés, Rose's book is unquestionably fundamental to the study of children's literature over the last thirty years, in the way that it reads childhood "innocence" as constructed, a performance invented by adults who are threatened by childhood's unfamiliar and unsettling polymorphism. Hardly any criticism of writing for children operates wholly outside Rose's influence. To some extent—this project included—most seek "the hidden adult" in children's literature, to use Perry Nodelman's term, the adult or adults whose desires shape writing for children. However, also like the work of Ariés, Rose's book makes comprehensive claims that seem essentializing today, and therefore less persuasive for their unwillingness to consider alternatives to this colonialist model. In arguing that there are *no* children in children's literature, only the phantasms created by adults, Rose denies the existence of children who write, speak and act back—either child characters who resist adult-imposed identities through actions intended and not intended by adult writers, or child readers who engage with texts through marginalia, reviews, and other responses. As a nuanced alternative to Rose's cynicism, Marah Gubar proposes an alternate way of allowing for the possibilities of children's literature while remaining cognizant that adulthood always already mediates constructions of childhood. In her study of Victorian children's

literature, Gubar suggests the term “artful dodger” as metonym for the child who resists easy signification or identity. Those children’s authors traditionally understood as promoting the Romantic, idealized “cult of the child”—Gubar includes Frances Hodgson Burnett and Lewis Carroll among these—are in fact conflicted as to how to represent the child, and in these representations we find possibilities for heterogeneous childhood.

These classic novels do not represent children as faultless others. Rather, they

conceive of child characters as socially saturated beings, profoundly shaped by the culture, manners, and morals of their time, precisely in order to explore the vexed issue of the child’s agency: given their status as dependent, acculturated beings, how much power and autonomy can young people actually have? In addressing this question, Golden Age authors often take a strikingly nuanced position, acknowledging the pervasive and potentially coercive power of adult influence while nevertheless entertaining the possibility that children can be enabled and inspired by their inevitable inheritance . . . To find the real artful dodgers of the Victorian period, then, we must turn to children’s literature, a genre that celebrates the canny resourcefulness of child characters without claiming that they enjoy unlimited power and autonomy. (4-5)⁵

Gubar’s analysis focuses on Victorian and Golden Age children’s literature, and with some arguable overlaps, Burnett in particular, my own emphasis is on a different time and continent. Allowing for differences between the historical and cultural contexts in which writers produced Golden Age children’s literature and twentieth-century American children’s fiction, I believe the texts I examine in this dissertation exhibit the same conflicted approach to childhood and child resourcefulness. Child characters in these books become agents through their interactions with local environments, in the process gaining a sense of autonomy, but their actions are simultaneously and paradoxically

⁵ At the Children’s Literature Association conference in June 2013, Gubar presented as part of a panel titled “Taking A Risk: Manifestos for the Study of Children’s Literature.” In her talk, she argued for what she calls “the kinship model,” wherein children’s literature criticism would focus on the commonalities between children and adults, while allowing for the very real differences that inevitably distinguish both constructions. I address this proposed model in my conclusion.

curtailed by the geographic limits imposed upon them. Like Gubar, I want to remain alert to the possibilities suggested by child characters' accomplishments, while still admitting that adult influence mediates and limits the range of their access.

This tension requires me to distinguish carefully from “real” children and the fictional ones I examine in this project.⁶ Child readers and other extra-literary children remain, for the most part, outside my framework. This is not, however, to suggest that “real” children have no place in the study of children’s literature. For the past thirty years, children’s literature scholarship has consistently explored the difference between children as embodied human beings and children as imagined persons mediated through adult writers, illustrators, publishers, editors, booksellers, and parents. Discussion of the former category requires the kind of research and methodologies beyond the purview of this dissertation, although certainly not beyond the purview of children’s literature scholarship.⁷ Without clear evidence for the way actual child readers engaged with and continue to engage with the majority of these texts, I can only write with any authority about the actions of child characters, the choices made by the adult authors who created them, and the larger cultural, geographic, and historical contexts invoked. Although there

⁶ Acknowledging that childhood, even outside the literary sphere, is a highly discursive process, I hesitate to use the word “real” without quotes that indicate how unstable it is as an adjective. “Real,” in the sense that I’m using it, refers to flesh-and-blood children, and is not meant to imply that these children are in any sense extricable from adult agendas or efforts that participate in their social formations.

⁷ Within the last two to three years, children’s literature scholarship seems to be expanding into the more interdisciplinary field of childhood studies, recognizing that the actions of “real” children should be acknowledged and explored. Robin Bernstein’s *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights* (2011) is one example. Through a cultural studies analysis that frames childhood as a performance and links literature to other kinds of material culture, Bernstein argues for a reading of toys and other child artifacts as “scriptive things” that explicitly invite certain kinds of play or responses. In so doing, she cites “real” children’s interactions with these artifacts (including Burnett, who once related an anecdote from her own childhood about whipping a black doll within a reenactment of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*). The conclusion to this dissertation explores some of the ways this project might be expanded to include the voices and experiences of “real” children, leaving behind Rose’s gloomy model for Gubar’s optimistic one.

is a place—and an increasingly important one—for a children’s literature criticism that takes into account the “real” children involved in the production and reception of their literature, my analysis of these texts is necessarily arbitrated by the looming presence of adulthood. In focusing so heavily on the adults of children’s literature rather than the “real” children of children’s literature, I do not intend to prove Rose’s thesis on the impossibility of children’s fiction, but instead to show that children’s literature is, in part, a negotiation between the adults who write children’s literature and the child characters who perform childhood in ways both inside and outside their authors’ intentions.

Regionalism and the Geography of Local Place

The multifaceted construction of childhood in twentieth-century children’s literature depends in large part on the production of small, accessible places and spaces. These settings are dynamic, implicating social, historical, geographic, and cultural contexts that exceed their immediate boundaries. As the writings of Alcott, Twain, Baum, Burnett, Wilder, and others indicate, the production of canonical U.S. children’s literature is closely tied to the interests of U.S. literary regionalism, a movement that arose in the postbellum period and remained popular until the advent of World War I. Although there is no real evidence that the authors of the texts I examine in this dissertation saw their work as literary regionalism, in the tradition of Sarah Orne Jewett, Charles Chesnutt, and other major U.S. regional writers, the way these texts construct regional and local place as oscillating and dynamic closely resembles the complex formations of regional and local place in that subgenre. Like the categories “child” and “children’s literature,” “regional” and “local” are unstable, shifting, and socially-constructed concepts, greatly

depended on their cultural and historical contexts. Like “child” and “children’s literature,” too, these geographic terms communicate a productive littleness. They indicate accessibility and difference while simultaneously gesturing towards the larger national, transnational, and translocal. Reading placed-based writing for children within the context of regional and local color fiction allows us to understand the ways children’s literature also confronts socio-historical and political concerns through immediate setting. Unmoored after the shocks of World War I and early modernism ripped through American literary movements, regionalism finds a home in twentieth-century U.S. children’s literature, which also recognizes the vital significance of agency, access, belonging, and relentless power negotiations between small and great figures.

Regionalism has an unfortunate and unwarranted reputation for insularity. The word summons the flat, empty provincialism of painter Thomas Kinkade: commercialized rural mawkishness with simple, stock characters and settings manufactured for a touristic and voyeuristic urban public. Nearly always identified as a limited, brief subset of the literary realism movement in the late nineteenth century, and in stark opposition to the volatile modernist movement that followed it, for many regionalism communicates staid, uninteresting homogeneity. Philip Fisher echoes generations of literary critics when he claims that the region “clings conservatively to stability and the transmission of values, habits and forms of expression from one generation to the next . . . [R]egionalism is code for spatial and temporal rootedness and the rejection of modernity” (Joseph 9). Despite this entrenched dismissiveness and the persistent, essentialized understandings of regional fiction, American studies and U.S. literary criticism have over the past few decades increasingly interrogated the way

regional writing engages with constructs of nationality and transnationality, viewing it as something far more dynamic and complex than previously assumed. Amy Kaplan and Richard Brodhead authored the first serious theoretical engagements with U.S. regionalism in the early 1990s, and although they both read regional fiction as affirming nationalist paradigms, their arguments are nevertheless ones that demonstrate the historical, social, and aesthetic importance of regional fiction to U.S. literature and culture. In “Nation, Region, Empire,” Kaplan claims that regionalism fosters a “national agenda of reunion,” figuring the region as an imagined, common past that all Americans share. Regional fiction is for an urban middle-class readership that consumes “images of rural ‘others’ as both a nostalgic point of origin and a measure of cosmopolitan development” (251). A form of literary tourism, regionalism naturalizes empire by shaping a relationship between the outsider reader and the “pristine authentic space immune to historical changes shaping [readers’] lives” (252). Brodhead develops Kaplan’s reading of regionalism as tourism, noting that the subgenre became popular during the postbellum years when vacation culture began to flourish among middle and upper-class Americans. Regionalism is fundamentally paradoxical, valuing a culture for its separateness while giving outsiders an opportunity to insert themselves within its borders; it fetishizes regional life for urban readers looking to escape the heterogeneity of the metropolis. Like Kaplan, Brodhead views regionalism within the context of the Civil War: “This genre’s great public flowering began . . . with the forcible repression of sectional autonomy in favor of national union and the legal supplanting of the locally variant by national norms of citizenly rights” (119). Both Kaplan and Brodhead present regional fiction as something irrevocably hegemonic, reinforcing and affirming

nationalist hierarchies and practices of othering. Nevertheless, both these readings grudgingly allow for the presence of unresolved paradoxes that later scholarship would come to define as intrinsic to the production of regionalism.

Critiquing Kaplan and Brodhead's school of thought, Judith Fetterley, Marjorie Pryse, and Stephanie Foote reposition regional literature as counter to the interests of the nation-state. In *Writing Out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture* (2003), Fetterley and Pryse suggest that regional writing privileges marginal lives and identities. While they identify "local color" as writing that frames regional spaces and persons as strange, exotic, or other, "regionalism" for Fetterley and Pryse gazes *from* the marginalized perspective of its characters and settings, creating "a vantage point within the network of power relations that provides a location for critique and resistance" (11). Less a descriptor of place than a political strategy, Fetterley and Pryse's regionalism is a "site of contestation" that creates a "category crisis . . . a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, [permitting] border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another" (229). Fetterley and Pryse locate regionalism primarily in the nineteenth-century work of white women and people of color, suggesting that writers including Sarah Orne Jewett, Sui Sin Far, Mary Austin, and Charles Chesnut draw attention to local setting in order to raise awareness of the contingencies of situatedness and perspective. Stephanie Foote, who takes care to separate her project from that of Fetterley and Pryse, nevertheless frames her critical lens as owing a debt to their feminist scholarship. Like Kaplan and Brodhead, she sees regional writing as "helping construct a common past in the face of . . . the increasing immigration and imperialism of the nineteenth century," but unlike Kaplan and Brodhead, she reads that

common past as heterogeneous, presenting unresolved differences of culture and perspective that rival those found in urban spaces. “The exotic yet familiar regional types populating small towns,” she writes, “are uncannily similar to the foreigners and immigrants in the city” (15). Regionalism plays with perspective, challenging perceptions of “foreign” and “native,” never reconciling precisely who belongs to which category.

Acknowledging the schism in scholarship on literary regionalism between those who believe it reinforces state hegemonies (Kaplan, Brodhead) and those who believe it challenges them (Fetterley, Pryse, Foote), Tom Lutz argues that regionalism’s relevance is in the way it does both:

As explanations [the hegemonic and antihegemonic approaches] fall short not because both are wrong, but because both are equally incomplete . . . [Regionalist literary texts] dramatize the differences between and within classes, regions, sexes, and communities, but not with the intention of resolving them. Instead of settling these debates, they opt for an oscillation between the sides, a kind of contrapuntal, unresolved Bakhtinian symphony of cultural voices and positions. (28)

The value of regional literature is the value of all literature: the ability to contain multitudes without resolution. Although the idea of a provincial cosmopolitanism seems counterintuitive, Lutz insists that “the competing cultural views voiced by visitors and visitees mirror and contend with one another,” thereby prompting readers to take in a multiplicity of perspectives (30). Like children’s literature, which oscillates between the perspectives and desires of children and adults, regionalism’s politics are by definition heterogeneous and often contradictory. In any given regional text we can encounter the reinforcement of nationalist paradigms through nostalgic longing that erases other competing histories *and* the critique of those same paradigms through a lens that favors site-specific dialects, customs, and cultures without an othering perspective. In direct

contradiction of Philip Fisher's claim that regionalism is stable and conservative, this literature is in fact both mobile and broadly inclusive, invoking the travel routes that narratives of visitation and encounter require, and demonstrating a cosmopolitan concern that takes into account numerous unreconciled interests.

With the exception of Lutz, the above critics read literary regionalism as bound within a narrow timeframe that barely outlasts the turn of the twentieth century. For the most part, all texts and authors considered to be part of the regionalist canon published before 1900, with the exception of Sui Sin Far and Mary Austin; most consider regionalism to be a response to a postbellum market demand that faded with the advent of World War I. Popular regional fiction arguably persists past well past World War I: in the writing of Sinclair Lewis, Anzia Yezierska, William Faulkner, Larry McMurtry, Stephen King, and Annie Proulx, among many others who created profoundly localized settings for their literature. However, the rapidly globalizing U.S. economy and new technologies that effectively erased distances between remote locations and urban centers make the continuing relevance of regionalism—either in literature or in social practice—seem shaky. Why does the local matter when the global seems more relevant now than ever? Can regional fiction survive when local place seems more than ever a *when* rather than a *where*: an inaccessible fictional past? Lutz's framework poses a possible answer to this important query, as does the continued work of scholars like Krista Comer and Neil Campbell in critical regional studies. In proposing a reading of the region as fundamentally cosmopolitan, Lutz shows us that the local implicates external thoughts and practices through fluctuating exchanges that transgress borders. Writing more recently, Comer and Campbell implicitly add to Lutz's framework through their call for a

revision of regionalism as *critical* regionalism: a practice as itinerant as it is rooted, reconceived as discursive, radically reordering “geographical common-senses to map spaces anew through third spaces, affective electronic posthumanisms, translocalities” (Comer 162). The local cannot survive as a practical or critical concept if we remain yoked to a persistent definition of it as insular, provincial, limited. Instead, the local has real relevance for a world increasingly shaking off the shackles of national boundaries. Neil Campbell’s concept of the American West, for example, incorporates outside and inside perspectives, examining Swiss photographer Robert Frank’s photos of Nevada, Luis Alberto Urrea’s border literature, and the deterritorialization of Native spaces through the establishment of the reservation:

“[T]he West is no longer ‘epic’—settled, enclosed, and internally coherent, fixed in time and etched in memory—but is seen more ‘as a meeting place, the location of the intersections of particular bundles of activity spaces’ . . . The region’s in-and out-flowing dialogic and diasporic histories and traditions should be given renewed importance in the transnational comprehension of the West as part of a larger global mobility of people and ideas—what [James] Clifford terms ‘intercultural import-export.’” (25)

Although Campbell makes a case for the West as an exceptional place, his call to read the region as always connected to concepts and histories that extend within, beyond, and outside it has value for other regional spaces as well. The regionalist critics above all conceive of regionalism and local place in significant differing ways, but the one thing they have in common is a view of the region as productively porous, a site of dynamic processes and exchanges, not walled off and rotting away from the illness of anti-modernity. Whether through interactions with nationalisms, transnationalism, or other,

external localities, regional and local place is always in conversation with persons, discourses, and geographies external to it.

There is no end of definitions of regionalism in regionalist scholarship, although those definitions clearly vary. For some, regionalism is an exercise that indirectly or directly affirms nationalist paradigms; for others, regionalism writes back against the nation, challenging its hegemonies through margin-centered voices and practices; for still others, regionalism does both, through an oscillating cosmopolitanism that contains multiple positions and desires. Surprisingly, however, very few have attempted concrete definitions of the term “region,” and still fewer the term “local.” *Local color*, as a term, has been the red-headed stepchild of regionalist scholarship since Fetterley and Pryse distinguished between margin-centered regionalism and othering regionalism by labeling the former regionalism and the latter local color. In their introduction to *Regionalism and the Humanities*, Timothy Mahoney and Wendy Katz describe the region as “an observable uniformity of certain cultural attitudes, behaviors, and artifacts in a socially and naturally defined place and time” (xi). The local suggests “an even greater particularity of interest and identity, an even smaller or narrower geographic base for group or individual identity” (ibid). For the most part, my definition of “region” and “regional” cleaves to Mahoney and Katz’s, particularly their focus on the social and temporal dimensions of regionality, but in the spirit of Lutz, Comer, and Campbell, I take issue with the term “uniformity.” To some extent, a regional place must produce certain particular place-based customs and practices, but—as the texts I explore in this project demonstrate—those customs and practices invoke far too many contradicting ideologies and desires to suggest uniformity. The region, for my purposes, is a place defined by

degrees of dissimilarity to nationalized and/or homogenized norms, constituted primarily by social and discursive acts that determine who belongs and who is excluded. In order to be “regional,” therefore, regionalist literature must take up Lutz’s practice of oscillation between the wildly varying perspectives of those within the region and those exterior to the region. As a practice, regionalism is paradoxically never settled. It is a mode of articulation for numerous, unresolved voices that reflect and respond to cultural, social, and historical paradigms through the production of specific place. Like Mahoney and Katz, I view the “local” as something separate from the “region,” suggesting a higher degree of idiosyncrasy. To their definition of peculiarity and specificity I would add the concept of contingency: locality, even more so than regionality, is a matter of point of view. While the U.S. region is something often situated on a map (the Great Plains, New England, the South), what constitutes the local is far more uncertain, depending entirely on one’s perspective, agency, time period, and access. The local is often a subset of the region—for example, Laura’s local in *Little House on the Prairie* is the house, creek, and accessible prairie fields within the larger region of the Great Plains—but, as in New York City children’s literature, the local is sometimes a concept relatively unattached to the larger region, an independent formation. “Local” suggests a delicious paradox: the detailed specificity of locality jostling against the uncomfortable slipperiness of the term’s definition. For this reason, I do not subscribe to Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse’s classification of local color literature as definitionally othering and regressive. While “local” and “region” are not interchangeable terms, “local color” was the primary term used in the late nineteenth century for regional fiction, and therefore summons an important chronology and context that should not be discounted. For my purposes, I see

no pressing need to draw a distinction between “local color” and “regionalism” as critical, complex concepts, with one major exception: as I will show in Chapter One, “local color” takes on a different connotation than “regionalism” when produced by writers who emphasize the significance of literal color to local place.

Finally, while the vast majority of scholarship I turn to in this dissertation is written by critics in the fields of children’s literature and literary regionalism, the way I conceive of (local) place and space owes a large debt to the work of Edward Soja, Michel Foucault, and Doreen Massey. In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Soja, a human geographer, introduces his concept of “thirdspace”: an interdisciplinary trialectic of spatiality, historicity, and sociality. Through a lens that considers the micro-geographies of the UC Irvine campus, the Los Angeles Civic Center, as well as the broader spatial critiques of historicism and feminism, Soja demonstrates that place cannot be conceived of without space; that the tangible materiality of place—traditionally understood to be “natural” and given—is inevitably entangled with social productions, engagements, and interactions. Soja’s framework builds on Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* to argue that our understandings of geography must transcend “the concrete materiality of spatial forms” and “re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms” to incorporate the shifting Thirdspace: a mode of thinking “radically open to additional othernesses, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge” (10, 61). The following readings of children’s literature intentionally channel Soja’s Thirdspace by exploring the ways history, space, place, and culture work together in an interwoven, intersectional grid always open to the possibilities of other knowledge productions. Like many of Soja’s writings, *Thirdspace* contains a lengthy engagement

with the theories of Michel Foucault, who proposed the “frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent . . . [yet] fruitful” concept of heterotopia (Soja 162). Heterotopic spaces are a kind of Thirdspace, a “fundamentally unreal” place that functions as a counter-site in which “real sites . . . are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (157). The heterotopia is set apart, distinguished by its difference; Foucault’s examples include the nineteenth-century boarding school, the rest home, the fairgrounds, and the psychiatric hospital. For its investment in peculiar micro-geographies, Foucault’s theory of heterotopic spaces is particularly productive in the context of the urban local in children’s literature, and therefore Chapter Four considers the ways literary child place in New York City functions as its own form of heterotopia. These child places are an unresolved amalgam of disparate elements, constituting a system of surveillance, and suggesting the presence of difference demarcated by porous borders and boundaries. Finally, Doreen Massey’s chapter “A Global Sense of Place” in *Space, Place, and Gender* asks a crucial question that directly addresses the relevance of locality in a mobile world where access and travel become, with the advent of new technologies, increasingly easier. “How,” she asks, “in the face of all this movement and intermixing, can we retain any sense of a local place and its particularity?” (146). Massey proposes a theory of a “progressive sense of place” that argues for local place as still extant and specific, but nevertheless obtaining its specificity from “a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (154). Local places are in fact “meeting places,” travel clusters, moments in networks of social relations that imply connections to other localities, nationalities, transnationalities. Massey points out that contrary to popular belief, local places do not retain singular identities, but contain

and comprise internal conflicts. The intermixing of these conflicts, exchanges, and networks produce the effects we define as “local,” embodied and occurring in a tangible location. Published in the mid 1990s, Massey’s framework of a globalized locality finds later echoes and reverberations in the twenty-first century scholarship of Tom Lutz, Krista Comer, and Neil Campbell, all of whom argue that our sense of literary, cultural, and historical locality must be radical and multi-directional. Literary critics engaging with place and space cite Soja and Foucault frequently; Massey much less often. Regardless of the extent to which literary scholarship acknowledges theories of human geography, humanities scholars and geographers undeniably conceive of place and space in slippery, complex ways that complement and build on one another. Literature adds other spatialities to the regions of human geography, while geography gives literary critics a way of articulating the significance of setting and sociophysical context.⁸

Children’s Literature and the Local

The preceding itinerary of concerns in children’s literature and regionalism share many themes in common. Both fields have a history of marginalization within the academy and within literary genres themselves. Traditionally and popularly, children’s literature is simple, reductive, without literary merit; the very word “childish” signifies triviality. Regionalism is equally dismissed as simplistic: insular, homogeneous, and anti-modern. Early criticism in both areas suggested that its literature uniformly supported hegemonic, dominant norms, while more recent criticism has favored nuanced views that

⁸ I elaborate in my conclusion on the potential fruitfulness of this relationship for children’s literature scholars and children’s geographies scholars.

show how these texts work in multifaceted ways. In most works of regional fiction, the nation acts as the always present shadow-partner to the region. Echoing that power construct, adulthood to a great extent defines children's literature and formations of childhood. Both explore issues of agency, access, and the possibilities of resistance to political power structures, and both interrogate oppositional categories such as belonging and exclusion, inside and outside, home and away, showing that the distance between apparent binaries is often less than it seems. By definition, regional fiction is invested in the specificities of local, accessible place, and many works of children's literature foreground the accessible specificities of place, producing a child-centric locality that depends on the ability of a child to enter and change it.

That regionalism finds a home in twentieth-century children's fiction is no accident. Although nineteenth-century regional children's fiction undeniably exists, the convergence of locality and writing for children escalated considerably in the twentieth century.⁹ I trace this increased convergence to an intensified cultural narrative of loss that permeated our perceptions of place and childhood—one that still exists today—and that emerged with greater frequency in children's literature as the twentieth century aged. Carolyn Steedman suggests that with the advent of Sigmund Freud's theories in the first years of the century, "a certain understanding of selfhood" depended on "the idea of the lost child within all of us," so that adult perceptions of their own identities became increasingly associated with an always-past, always-inaccessible childhood (4). Advances

⁹ The connection between regionalism and children's literature or childhood extends both ways. Several well-known nineteenth-century regionalists wrote for young people, Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman among them. Children often figure frequently in regional stories. Bret Harte's "The Luck of Roaring Camp" features an orphaned infant that becomes the son of a mining camp, while Zitkala-Sa's *American Indian Stories* are sketches of Native child life at missionary and labor schools.

in technology and science had a teleological frame, associated universally with a narrative of development that invoked a chronology:

[T]he dominant ideas of growth and development that were used in [biology] and in the investigation of the forms of human culture [in anthropology] implied a material progression in individual lives, which increased in symbolic importance during the course of the century, where by that which was traversed (the course of an individual life; the growth through childhood to maturity; the development of a people or a nation) was, in the end, left behind and abandoned. In this way, childhood as scientifically described was always about that which was temporary and impermanent, always described a loss in adult life. (10)

Childhood, as perceived psychologically and biologically, is a story of the inevitability of loss: each day the child survives, she becomes mentally and physically a little less of a child and a little more of an adult. Returning again to Jacqueline Rose, who claims that the investment of children's fiction is in "secur[ing] the child who is outside the book," we see that this narrative of perceived or immanent loss permeates children's literature, which often arrests its child protagonists permanently on the brink of puberty (2).¹⁰

Examining late nineteenth-century regional literatures, Stephanie Foote locates the desire for local fictions in a sense of lost past that produces yearning, suggesting that the longing that suffuses regional writing occurs only when place is perceived as absent. This nostalgic longing—which I explore more fully in Chapter Three—is fueled by a market demand: as Foote argues, the region is "a place in which one can buy public memories" of what is past (35). Regionalism became popular at a time when local difference was under perceived threat from technological advances that greatly improved mobility and access, and provided a seeming retreat for anxieties related to the expansion of U.S.

¹⁰ This may be, for example, why the sequels to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* proved more popular than the sequels to *Anne of Green Gables*. Both Anne and Dorothy begin their series at about eleven years of age, but unlike Dorothy—who in Peter Pan-like fashion never grows up—Anne ages to maturity, marries, and has children of her own.

empire, anxieties that grew as the twentieth century developed (Funchion 431).

Importantly, regionalism's sense of history and loss is never too far away from the rhetoric of (lost) childhood:

In [Jewett and Hamlin] Garland's writing, we can see that the region bears the peculiar marks of a past that roughly corresponds to a loose rendition of 'childhood.' Although Garland believes that the region . . . exists in real time and is dependent on national financial markets, he nonetheless casts many of his stories as a kind of return to the innocence of the region, even if that innocence must be reclaimed from its misrepresentation in fictional accounts. (Foote 59)

The past "innocence" of childhood is as much a social construction as the past "innocence" of the region, something figured as absent or in danger of being absent. Children and child characters are not innocent, and the region is never innocent, in the sense that none of them are ever exempt from political discourses, desires, or social practices that inform their identities. Nevertheless, neither formation can be extricated from the sense of perceived loss that increasingly fuels their cultural relevance through the twentieth century: an emotional and political production that continually oscillates between imagined pasts and imagined presents. While many have argued that market demand for regional fiction petered out in the first years of the twentieth century, I believe that claim disregards the emerging trends in children's literature in that period towards locality, and the popularity of texts for children that increasingly address the mutual adult anxieties surrounding childhood and local place.

The children's texts I explore in these pages all foreground the learned agency of their child protagonists within accessible environments, enabling child characters to shape their local place while simultaneously locating them in detailed spaces that ensure they remain always present and never lost. Each text or grouping of texts demonstrates

how locality and selfhood are processes of co-production; child characters produce their local environments just as much as local environments produce children. Because my argument for the complexity and literary value of regional children's literature depends on its inherent cosmopolitanism and unreconciled tensions, desires, and politics, I have chosen works that challenge narrow definitions of regionalism and children's literature in four different areas, defying borders of genre, nationality, temporality, and urban/rural divides. With the exception of the final novel I examine, *The Planet of Junior Brown*, the central child protagonists of these works are all white and female. Class divides the list; Dorothy Gale, Laura Ingalls, and Caddie Woodlawn are the daughters of relatively poor homesteaders, while Mary Lennox, Eloise, and Harriet M. Welsch are decidedly upper-class.¹¹ Although my analysis, with exceptions in Chapters Three and Four, does not focus extensively on race or gender, it is no accident that the child character who participates in a process of co-construction with her local environment is so often white and female. The default race in children's literature was—and still is—white.¹² White children's development, learned agency, and increased engagement with social formations has always been of central concern for writers, illustrators, publishers, and buyers. Whiteness allows the children of children's literature access and legitimacy: Eloise can frolic about the Plaza Hotel at will, while Junior Brown is the object of avoidance and horror from a mostly-white audience at a Lincoln Center concert. But while Junior and his best friend Buddy Clark have access to a network of sites largely

¹¹ All three of the girls who do not belong to a privileged economic class are the children of homesteaders and farmers, and explicitly weaved into a romanticized, historicized narrative of American self-reliance. Their whiteness is in large part what grants them this belonging. Again, *Junior Brown* proves the exception.

¹² In 2012, the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) reviewed 3,600 children's books published that year. 93% featured white children as protagonists.

unpoliced by adults, the girl characters of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Secret Garden*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, *Eloise*, and *Harriet the Spy* remain within relatively narrow boundaries, hemmed in by restrictions from the adults in their lives. Glinda orders Dorothy to meet the Wizard so that she can return home. Mary Lennox's entrance into the regional space of Yorkshire depends on decisions made by her uncle and other caretakers. Laura and Caddie must abide by strict codes of what "little girls" can and cannot do. Eloise never sets foot onto 5th Avenue, always staying within the hotel. Even Harriet, who has relative autonomy and whose parents never seem to monitor her comings and goings, keeps her spy route within a radius of several blocks. Child characters in these texts accrue certain kinds of agency, but there are fairly severe limits to that agency (ones not imposed, for example, on Huckleberry Finn, who sails on the Mississippi at will). Although I will not make an essentialized statement that adults universally restrict girl characters' exploration of regional and local places in ways not found in books with male protagonists, the high incidence of one gender and one race in twentieth-century regional children's fiction seems to suggest an investment in whiteness and femininity as attributes that suit accessible environments, policed as attributes deserving of protection. Innocence, as Robin Bernstein argues, is gendered female and raced white (4). *The Planet of Junior Brown* is the outlying text in this dissertation, and I include it here because the race and gender of its protagonists arguably enables them to resist the surveillance found in every other children's book I consider.

Regionalism is by definition a constellation of juxtaposed and varying desires, formations, and conflicts. The first major work of twentieth-century children's regionalism brilliantly fulfills that definition by challenging conceptions of regionalism

as inherently realist, expanding the umbrella of the subgenre to encompass a fantasy novel. L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) bears little resemblance at first glance to the nineteenth-century regional writing that precedes it. With the exception of its first few pages, the vast majority of the novel takes place in a fantastic land with witches, wizards, talking animals, and unfamiliar types of people. Regionalism as traditionally performed focuses on everyday lives and the details of the supposedly mundane, and *Oz*'s world is anything but mundane. Despite this wide gap between regionalism's perceived interests and the perceived interests of fantasy, however, *Oz* embraces common stylistic and critical concerns of local color literature. In my first chapter, "The Matter With Kansas: L. Frank Baum, Hamlin Garland, and the Local Color of *Oz*," I argue that the dual influences of cosmopolitanism and the Great Plains regionalism popularized by regionalist Hamlin Garland at the turn of the century produce not only Baum's Kansas but the Land of Oz itself. Like the United States, Oz is a country never captured holistically or homogeneously but instead presented as shifting, segmented space, a series of complex routes that also acknowledge the organizing principle of region. Through his careful, detailed construction of a regionalized place and space, Baum obeys Garland's call for a regional literature that acknowledges "a great heterogeneous, shifting, brave population, a land teeming with unrecorded and infinite drama," demonstrating the extent to which writing for children and regionalism function as *literature*: the presentation of unresolved, conflicting elements and desires (*Crumbling Idols* 15). Baum's novel produces both realistic and fantastic regional spaces which his child protagonist helps to shape through discursive exchanges, while remaining largely unchanged herself.

Reflecting a multiplicity of perspectives and cultural productions, *Oz* is a cosmopolitan project no less regional for its investment in diversities. Cosmopolitanism may seem at odds with regionalism, supposedly a form that celebrates isolation and the homogeneity of experience. However, as Tom Lutz demonstrates, regionalism functions as a mode of articulation for multiple voices, positions, and desires, both inside and outside the region. Featuring characters who travel and encounter disparate populations, regional writing relishes the heterogeneity of the contact zone. Baum was no stranger to diverse regionalisms prior to the publication of *Oz*. In 1890 he wrote a weekly newspaper column in Aberdeen, South Dakota that focused on the idiosyncrasies of lived experience in that small, localized community. “Our Landlady” checks off many of the attributes of textbook regionalism, but in several columns towards the end of its one-year run, Baum introduces decidedly fantastic elements, incorporating fictional devices and technologies not yet available at the turn of the century. “Our Landlady” promotes a cosmopolitan perspective, oscillating between the detailed local of Aberdeen and the global economy of news and politics; its hybridizing of regionalism and fantasy also attends to multiple generic interests. These complex and never-settled oscillations anticipate the crossbred concerns to come in *Oz* a decade later.

Oz stakes a firm claim in the turn-of-the-century battle between Eastern and Western U.S. literature, a literary effort on Baum’s part not only aligned with Garland’s call for a regionalized literature but one that adds, through its publication and popularity, to the attempted re-centering of literary production in the Midwest. This re-centering incorporates new forms of seeing: Baum’s novel makes effective use of color, a simultaneous nod to the contemporary popularity of local color literature *and* to changing

technologies that made possible the increased production of hued dyes in architecture, clothing, newspapers, and books. The new dominance of color in everyday life made it possible for artists and writers to incorporate color as a perception shifter, engineering encounters with color between viewers and artifacts that challenged commonplace experiences of reality. *Oz*'s colorful local is local color, its detailed descriptions of immediate place heavily dependent upon chromaticity. Like Garland's regional places, *Oz* embraces vibrant color. The novel also emphasizes the importance of empathy to the construction of community, and produces an intimate, accessible environment where its child protagonist can participate in discursive and physical exchanges.

These exchanges are both significant and limited. Dorothy Gale's efforts and agency within the world of *Oz* are key to the novel's production of conflict. Her importance to the production of locality in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* signals the new, anxious, and intensifying centrality of children to U.S. culture and place in the twentieth century. Dorothy effects change, most notably by killing two villainous witches, but none of the change she participates in alters her status as a child; her acts of manslaughter, for example, are entirely accidental, and therefore allow her to retain a vestige of innocence that defines perceptions of childishness. Although Dorothy contributes to the construction of the novel's local color—quite literally when she removes her green-tinted glasses within the Emerald City—she herself does not change. In enacting a childishness that resists change or disappearance, Dorothy is less a child than a performance of a child, embodying adult desires to ensure the survival of both locality and childhood.

Baum is not the only major children's writer to defy traditional genre boundaries in cultivation of a literary regionalism for young people. In my second chapter, "Of an

order entirely new': Translocality, Dialect, and *The Secret Garden*," I examine the border crossings performed by Frances Hodgson Burnett's well-known novel *The Secret Garden* (1911). *Garden*'s country of origin has been a topic of debate for as long as it has received critical attention, due to its author's ambiguous nationality, the novel's publication, and its setting. Burnett was born in England, moved to the United States in adolescence, wrote *Garden* while living in England, and published it in America. Set in rural Yorkshire, *Garden* does appear to be classic British provincialism, the story of three children who nurture a garden within the walls of a forbidding manor estate and who, in the process, play with local dialect and customs. However, the debate over the novel's country of origin is largely besides the point: *The Secret Garden* is a novel about the power of locality, its productions of place operating outside of a paradigm that centers nationalism. Burnett's ambiguous nationality plays a large part in the way her novel shapes environment; her early years as a writer in East Tennessee were spent crafting local color fiction set in the Appalachian region she came to know intimately. Largely viewed as a children's novelist, most criticism of Burnett's work focuses entirely on *Garden*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, or *A Little Princess*, overlooking the copious amount of fiction she produced for adults in the nineteenth century. This fiction—largely regionalist writing—frames Burnett's engagement with place and locality throughout her literary career. I argue in this chapter that *The Secret Garden*'s production of local place in Yorkshire, England closely resembles productions of local place in U.S. regionalist fiction, including Burnett's early work. As John Plotz has argued, British provincial fiction set within a particular region largely stays within boundaries of place and space, rarely gesturing towards interests or desires exterior to its environment, rarely

distinguishing between the interests of the region and the interests of the nation. *The Secret Garden*, conversely, creates a productively unstable locality that dismantles easy discursive and literal borders. By incorporating elements of realism and romanticism, foregrounding a contact zone where strangers encounter natives, delineating local space through dialect, emphasizing the significance of platonic relationships, and embracing performances of queerness and empathy, *Garden* manufactures a mobile regionalist discourse that resembles engagements with locality in U.S. literature.

This mobility suggests a transitive cross-space that denies the limits of nationalist borders, and therefore I use the term *translocal* to describe *Garden*'s oscillations between the environment of Yorkshire and its legacy in U.S. local color fiction. The translocal, as a concept, acknowledges the significance of lived, everyday experiences, while suggesting that these experiences invite and result from exchanges outside the immediate sphere of the local. Yorkshire in *The Secret Garden* is not the actual embodied county, but an imagined representation, constructed out of an amalgam of Burnett's regional fiction written forty years earlier, her own experiences in childhood and adolescence mediated through memory and time, and the legacy of Emily Brontë's Yorkshire-set classic *Wuthering Heights*. That Yorkshire is a literary performance of a heterogeneous collection of Burnett's experiences and cultural references does not make the novel any less regional, but rather demonstrates that written locality is always the result of multiple routes and flows that transcend delineated borders. Burnett's Yorkshire is a locality that depends as much on time as it does on discursive space and natural place, the echoes of 1870s U.S. local color fiction and Burnett's personal experiences with dialect shaping *Garden*'s multifaceted performance of place. In this chapter, I examine in detail two of

Burnett's short stories, "Seth" and "Esmeralda," both written and published in 1877, demonstrating how both of these stories refuse neat national and discursive boundaries, practicing translocality in a way that realigns common perceptions of locality in U.S. local color fiction, and presaging Burnett's own engagement with local color concerns in *The Secret Garden*.

Like "Seth," "Esmeralda," and many other U.S. regional texts of the nineteenth century, *Garden* uses dialect as a shorthand for regional difference. Dialect and place in this novel are inextricable from queerness, the word *queer* deployed over and over again in relation to place, emotion, and speech. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse contend that queerness is central to the production of regional literature, calling into question readers' perceptions of what actions occupy the center and which ones occupy the margins. In *The Secret Garden*, it is queer speech and queer place that marks Mary Lennox and Colin Craven's emotional difference from homogenized English norms, providing a vehicle through which these characters become social and geographic actors. This queerness evokes difference, but it also suggests mobility; the use of dialect as "queer" in *Garden* reflects the unsettled conflicts in U.S. dialect literature over dominant and minor speechways, a tension never fully resolved. By suggesting that "queer speech" is something that can be learned or discarded as suits the speaker, Burnett shifts our understandings of difference, showing how the foreign can be familiar and the familiar can be foreign. Her Yorkshire is an intimate space, where local dialect creates closeness, empathy, and affection, ultimately enabling the novel's child characters to participate in the production of their environment in a way that best suits their own desires and needs.

Regionalism in twentieth-century children's literature troubles definitions of genre, as I show in Chapter One, and it troubles national borders, as I show in Chapter Two. In the third chapter of my dissertation, "A Pioneer and an American: *Little House on the Prairie*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, Regionalism, and Nationalism," I show how regionalism for children also troubles time. Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* and Carol Ryrie Brink's *Caddie Woodlawn* are similar in many ways. Both are semi-autobiographical novels published in 1935, narrating the adventures of two high-spirited young girls who live with their white settler families on Midwestern homesteads during the 1860s. Despite these vital overlaps, the novels' politics are at odds. I argue in this chapter that bringing *Prairie* and *Caddie* into conversation with each other enables us to realize that these two Depression-era works reflect opposing sides of a critical national conversation in the 1930s regarding independence and interdependence. Local place is the site through which Wilder and Brink's child characters enact these debates, demonstrating that an engagement with their proximate environment enables these characters to participate in the formation of national and nationalist discourses.

Despite their emphasis on the localized place of the white settler, these books disagree as to the processes that construct locality. *Little House on the Prairie* is the offspring of explicit libertarian ideology, showcasing the values of Wilder and her daughter/editor Rose Wilder Lane, who believed firmly that the best government was minimal or non-existent. Wilder and Lane's children's book manufacture a localized setting that they implicitly contend is the product of individual effort, a homestead crafted only by the labor of Charles and Caroline Ingalls, and not connected in any way to government-sanctioned practices or legislation like the Homestead Act. Although Wilder

and Lane's politics are anti-statist, they nevertheless contribute to a nationalist project by producing a nostalgic regional setting, in which getting and having are the results of powerful longing. The homespace is possible only through appropriation. Wilder and Lane ground *Prairie's* deep nostalgia in an aesthetics of homemaking that both aligns the novel with other Great Plains literature—including the work of Hamlin Garland and Mari Sandoz—and bridges the distancing gap between the novel's publication time and the time in which it is set. For young child readers in the 1930s, the 1860s are a distant, othered time. Wilder and Lane manage to make that time familiar and familial by producing an intimate, snug space and by creating a lexicon of powerful longing tied to familiar objects and food, focusing on elements known to their implied child readers. Through this emphasis on desire and a masterful deployment of carefully chosen language and imagery, Wilder and Lane construct a comforting homespace they encourage their readers to long for, building a nostalgia that depends on the pull of possession and consumption for its survival. Laura Ingalls is the vehicle through which they thread this manufactured longing, showing how child characters both participate in the process of building snug locality, and how that locality, once manufactured, serves fundamentally traditional needs.

Unlike *Little House on the Prairie*, *Caddie Woodlawn* frames local place as the result of collaboration, cooperation, and social interdependence, a thoroughly Rooseveltian ethos. To be American, in *Caddie*, is to perform outreach at the local level, and the longed-for past is not one that celebrates individualism, but the power of community. If the Depression-threatened nation is to survive, Brink suggests, it will be through a process of reintegration; nearly every conflict in *Caddie* reproduces a pattern of

sectionalism followed by resolution, the Civil War the larger context for these smaller battles. I trace *Caddie*'s complex investment in unification to the family name, Woodlawn, which brings together two separate concepts—the wood and the lawn—and attempts to resolve them through synthesis, although ultimately “wood” and “lawn,” in the surname, are not wholly reconciled. Throughout *Caddie Woodlawn*, Brink attempts to suture disparate elements, including race, gender, and geography, but never successfully manages to subsume the racially mixed Hankinson boys into the white community, or to reconcile Caddie's “tomboy” nature with her feminine mother and sister, or blend the urban center to the regional periphery, or the foreign country with the familiar domestic. Although Caddie herself supposedly crosses racial borders through her performance of Nativeness—her “red” hair and skin suggesting common signifiers for Native people, her ability to bring about peace between the whites and the local tribe—the Hankinsons, who are half-Native, cannot be successfully integrated into the white community, and must disappear halfway through the text to ensure that Brink's narrative is not disrupted. Caddie learns to leave behind boyish actions and boyish play for more feminine attributes, but her negotiation of gender is not nearly as binaried as it seems, ultimately allowing Caddie to mediate a surprisingly provocative gray area, in which she discovers that her father performs the kind of femininity she values. Finally, *Caddie* attempts to bring together the urban center of Boston and the rural regional of Dunnville through the arrival of visiting Cousin Annabelle to the Woodlawn home, reproducing a common trope of regional literature in which the visitor and the visited discover mutually beneficial commonalities. In the last pages of the novel, *Caddie* names herself “a pioneer and an American,” two terms that serve as signifiers for the novel's oscillating binaries,

always in attempted reconciliation and never fully coalesced. Her actions throughout the novel help bring about a locality that depends on successful suture, but that locality ultimately supports a nationalist ideology, one that *Caddie Woodlawn* believes is essential to the continued survival of the United States in the twentieth century.

While Wilder and Brink's child characters navigate wide expanses of prairie and wood, the New York City residents in Chapter Four, "'Apt to be on any floor at any time': Localities in New York City Children's Fiction," often move in narrower places. In arguing for a reading of urban literature through a regionalist lens, I trouble a traditionally preserved and problematic assumption in regionalist scholarship that "urban" and "local color" are mutually exclusive terms. Mid-century New York City children's literature creates a sense of the local through foregrounding physically smaller environments: the hotel, the neighborhood, and the school, among other places. I read these constructions of localized child place within the urban as Foucauldian heterotopias, or spaces set apart from the ordinary that function as heterogeneous counter-sites. These are sites formed primarily through the agential actions of child characters, in response to adult influence, and in direct violation of adult policies that advocate the containment and restriction of children. Nevertheless, two of the texts I examine ultimately ensure their child characters remain fixed within relatively accessible environments, while the geography of the third text is far wider, less immediate, and largely outside adult influence. Most children's regional fiction negotiates between child agency and adult desires, but *The Planet of Junior Brown* largely eschews the anxieties of adult concerns, suggesting that the extent to which adults surveil child bodies depends in large part on constructs of race, class, and gender.

The only picture book I examine in this dissertation, *Eloise* (1955) constructs local place through a careful interplay between written text and image. Set entirely within the Plaza Hotel, *Eloise* follows its eponymous five-year-old character as she navigates her home environment, writing on walls, assisting waiters, riding in elevators, and pouring water down the mail chute. Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight arrange text and image in a way that forces one to rely visually on the other for a more complete meaning, rendering the focus on embodied locality in the book's content in the tangible form of the book itself, often through illustrations of Eloise affecting her environment. Eloise appropriates an "adult" place—a hotel—for purposes often at odds with adult desires, translating a space of rest and rejuvenation into a space of play and excitement. Her movements are intensely local, affecting her immediate environment, and almost always suggest the presence of a child-created heterotopic counter-site, one set apart from normative sites through its resistance to adult mediation. Eloise teases readers with her mobility, informing us that she is "apt to be on any floor at any time," and the illustrations affirm that unsettling agility, showing multiple Eloises dancing up and down hallways and inside elevators. Nevertheless, Eloise never leaves the Plaza Hotel itself within *Eloise*, suggesting that child mobility and the child's re-appropriation of adult spaces is only appealing—to adults—within a safely contained sphere.

Like *Eloise*, *Harriet the Spy* (1964) features a child who defies adult-regulated place to construct her own locality; Harriet M. Welsch, however, leaves the confines of her home. A self-defined spy, Harriet manufactures a spy route within her Upper East Side neighborhood near Carl Schurz Park, observing several different adults on a daily basis without their knowledge. The child is traditionally an object for the consumption of

adults, but *Harriet* twists that relationship, framing adults as objects for a child's (visual, emotional) consumption. Harriet's negotiation and construction of local place depend almost exclusively on her resistance to adult-imposed hierarchies, and her emotional growth paradoxically depends on the process of inserting herself into self-created small environments. Although *Harriet* allows its child protagonist relative freedom in forming her personal geographies, and even couches its moral message in surprising advice—"Sometimes you have to lie"—that moral message, arguably the novel's climactic moment, stems from an adult figure: Harriet's nurse, Ole Golly. Harriet's agency determines the geography of *Harriet the Spy*, but the novel relies on an adult to deliver its defining lesson, suggesting that child-created sites cannot wholly be extricated from adult thoughts or desires.

The Planet of Junior Brown is this dissertation's outlier: a novel published in the 1970s, later than any other considered here, and with two male, black child protagonists, one of whom is working-class, and the other homeless. Every other book I consider in this project is well-known, part of the children's literature canon, but *Junior Brown* remains on the periphery, relatively invisible.¹³ I suggest that this marginality has much to do with *Junior Brown*'s marked resistance to the careful surveillance of its child characters. Unlike *Oz*, *The Secret Garden*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *Caddie Woodlawn*, *Eloise*, or *Harriet the Spy*, *Junior Brown*'s production of locality is frustratingly ruptured, a hodgepodge of sites glued together by Buddy Clark's ability to navigate the streets of Manhattan's Upper West Side. While *Eloise* remains within the

¹³ Only in the last few years has *Junior Brown* received any significant amount of critical attention in children's literature scholarship, with essays by Naomi Lesley and Eric Tribunella.

safe walls of the Plaza Hotel, and Harriet never leaves the few blocks around her home that constitute her spy route, *Junior Brown*'s locality is a constellation of basements in abandoned buildings, rooms appropriated for homeless boys of color to provide them with shelter and community. The system has failed Buddy Clark and Junior Brown, and in its absence they create their own system, their own localities, to serve their specific needs. In the final scene of *Junior Brown*, a schizophrenic child leaves his home for one of these basements because his best friend understands that the adult-authored system will only do harm, not good: "You put Junior in a hospital and he won't never come out. They'll lose him . . . They'll see how black he is, and they'll say that's the problem, we got to get to the white inside" (187-88). *Junior Brown* allows its children to have the final word, the final action, and the final decision: an uncomfortable rejection of authority that refuses to reassure adult concerns.

I conclude this project by considering what it has to add to current conversations in children's literature scholarship, and how I might more explicitly incorporate work currently being done in the field of children's geographies as I revise and shape this into a publishable book. Although I believe that literary regionalism—a field traditionally understood to be largely postbellum—finds a home in children's literature in the twentieth century—the stakes of this connection ultimately transcend literature to incorporate lived practices. Increasingly, children's literature scholarship has been incorporating disciplines and practices external to the literary, emphasizing material culture, psychology, television, film, theater, and history, in an attempt to discover "real" children's responses and productions of their own culture. Although many still subscribe to Jacqueline Rose's view that children's literature (and culture) is impossible, always

mediated through adulthood, the last few years have seen the publication of new scholarship by Robin Bernstein, Kenneth Kidd, and others that investigates the way “real” children participate in the formation of their social identities. By integrating scholarship and studies in children’s geographies, a subset of human geographies that looks critically at the ways children shape their socio-physical environments, I intend to bridge the literary and the geographic, showing how fictional children’s negotiation of their local environments anticipates, challenges, reaffirms, or subverts “real” children’s negotiation of their local environments. This book project joins the work of Bernstein and Kidd in calling for a new interdisciplinarity in children’s literature scholarship that acknowledges the porousness of literature, showing how printed texts are always in conversation with other, less tangible texts and cultures. Children’s geographies, as a field, acknowledges that children are agential beings who shape their environments, both immediate and far-flung. As a literary scholar, I intend to incorporate this ethnographic work with children to show how children’s literature is integral to the process of place construction, for children inside and outside books.

Chapter 1:

The Matter with Kansas: L. Frank Baum, Hamlin Garland, and the Local Color of *Oz*

“Tell me,” [the Princess] resumed, “are you of royal blood?”
“Better than that, ma’am,” said Dorothy. “I came from Kansas.”

L. Frank Baum, *Ozma of Oz*

“For Baum,” writes Michael Patrick Hearn in *The Annotated Wizard of Oz*, “the local color of Kansas was gray.” L. Frank Baum, who by all accounts visited Kansas only once, drew heavily on his years in South Dakota as inspiration for the bleak prairie where Dorothy Gale, Aunt Em, and Uncle Henry live. The opening chapter of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), dedicated to establishing this miserable scenery, shares a close stylistic and descriptive kinship with the writing of well-known regionalist Hamlin Garland, who made his home in Dakota Territory just seven years before Baum. However, the relationship between regional fiction and Baum’s *Oz* is in no way limited to these naturalist descriptions of rural Kansas. In this chapter, I argue that the dual influences of cosmopolitanism and the Great Plains regionalism popularized by Garland at the turn of the century produce not only Baum’s Kansas but the Land of Oz itself. Like the United States, Oz is a country never captured holistically or homogeneously but instead presented as shifting, segmented space, a series of complex routes that also acknowledge the organizing principle of region. In producing *Oz*, Baum engages with the tensions between the past, present, and future, entrances and exits, while maintaining a fidelity to detailed descriptions of immediate place: all central hallmarks and concerns for works of literary regionalism. Therefore *Oz* is not only the first major work of American

fantasy for children, but the first major work of twentieth-century American literary regionalism for children. Through his careful, detailed construction of a specific yet dynamic place and space, Baum faithfully obeys Garland's call for an American regional literature that acknowledges "a great heterogeneous, shifting, brave population, a land teeming with unrecorded and infinite drama" (*Crumbling Idols* 15). *Oz* emphasizes a place-centered oscillation between heterogeneous voices, genres, and customs. In acknowledging the ways this novel functions as regionalism, I am simultaneously making a case for *Oz* as something more than its accepted designation as an allegorical tale of fantasy, and advocate reading it as an intensely complex and dynamic text invested in cosmopolitan multiplicity. As *Oz* demonstrates, works of regional children's literature are *literature* first and foremost: a collection of unresolved desires, perspectives, and positions.

For more than a century, writers and scholars of American literary regionalism have typically defined regional fiction as a minor outcrop of the realist movement, which, like regionalism, flourished during the years between the Civil War and the First World War. Therefore there exists a quiet and unchallenged assumption among those who write and study regional fiction that all regionalism is also realism. *Oz* is a fantasy novel, not a work of literary realism. Unlike the other books I will explore in subsequent chapters, *Oz* bears, on first glance, little resemblance to canonical regional writing as Hamlin Garland understood it or as the vast majority of scholars would recognize it. Most of *Oz*'s pages take place in a fantasy land that looks nothing like the New England villages of Sarah Orne Jewett's short stories, or the New York City ghettos in Abraham Cahan's writing, or the prairie towns of Willa Cather's novels. Yet despite this fact, *Oz* is nevertheless

regionalism: regionalism reframed within a different genre and for a different audience. His fantasy landscape, despite retaining the magical elements that define the genre, is also not entirely divorced from the realist concerns that influence regionalism. There are stark differences between Oz and the everyday verisimilitude found in works by William Dean Howells, Henry James, Stephen Crane, and Edith Wharton, among others, but *Oz* ultimately functions, much like realism, as “a strategy for imagining and managing the threats of social change” (Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* 10). *Oz* stakes a firm claim in the turn-of-the-century battle between Eastern and Western U.S. literature, a literary effort on Baum’s part not only aligned with Garland’s call for a regionalized literature but one that adds, through its publication and popularity, to the attempted re-centering of literary production in the Midwest. These responses are not solely external to the text. Dorothy Gale¹ herself is a change agent, her efforts and agency within the world of Oz key to the novel’s production of conflict. Her importance to the production of locality in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* heralds the anxious, and intensifying centrality of children to U.S. culture and spatiality in the twentieth century.

As I have already argued in my introduction, the rise of local color children’s literature in the twentieth century is no ahistorical accident. Just as adults began increasingly to view childhood as something to be preserved, something always in the process of being lost, they began to think of locality as likewise enshrined and endangered. *Oz* is the bell that tolls an oncoming convergence of these two areas, where the child becomes the figure most capable of affecting and producing locality; the relative smallness of the child and the relative smallness of the local match well. Placing the child

¹ Dorothy’s surname is not mentioned until the third *Oz* novel.

character in a local environment satisfies multiple and conflicting cultural adult desires. The pre-pubescent child² is a figure that inherently heralds change. She implies through her existence the inevitable onset of development and the loss of childishness, a source of anxiety for a culture that increasingly fetishized childhood as a status that required protection and maintenance. However, Dorothy never ages in any of the *Oz* novels written by Baum, and so in this way Baum simultaneously foregrounds the promise of change and denies it. He uses the child Dorothy as a catalyst for change while fixing her in time, preserving her childishness by not allowing her to age. This is a fixed state meant to appeal in different ways to subsequent generations of child readers and to the adults who purchase, disseminate, and produce *Oz*: for them, this constancy is a kind of reassurance, a rejection of inevitable loss. Dorothy's actions in *Oz* also address other cultural anxieties, ones that have to do with location. Her ability to shape her immediate environments is balm to increasing concerns in the twentieth century that local place—and the individual's capacity to affect it—still survive. *Oz* foregrounds local place—both realistic (Kansas) and fantastic (*Oz*)—as the setting within which Dorothy learns to participate in the discursive construction of her environment. By foregrounding the child as the figure most able to affect local space, he connects these two constructions—childhood and locality—in a way that ensures neither can be produced without the other.

² The best estimate we have for Dorothy's age is eleven years. Baum never specifies how old Dorothy is, but in a later novel, *The Lost Princess of Oz*, he notes that she is a year older than a character named Trot, who is eventually specified (in an official *Oz* novel written by Ruth Plumly Thompson after Baum's death) to be ten. If accurate, this age is significant; it is almost certainly as old as Dorothy could be while still remaining free from the effects of puberty. Baum arrests her at an age where Dorothy has internalized enough discourse to be socially fluent, allowing her to be as effective as possible at influencing and engaging with others, but she still remains unquestionably a child.

To understand the ways *Oz* works as regional literature, we must first locate the novel not only within the context of American literary regionalism, but within and alongside the cultural and literary rise of cosmopolitanism, a philosophy that in large part defined intellectual conversations in the twentieth-century United States.

Cosmopolitanism, as *fin de siècle* contemporaries understood and deployed the term, was an invitation towards a multiplicity of perspectives and various cultural productions: a desire to experience, sample, and move between heterogeneous spaces, creating a patchwork quilt of experiences and knowledge. Within the sphere of the literary, cosmopolitanism served, as Tom Lutz argues, “an ethos of representational inclusiveness, of the widest possible affiliation, and concurrently one of aesthetic discrimination and therefore exclusivity. At the same time that it embraces the entire world . . . literary cosmopolitanism necessitates an evaluative stance.” This duality—a simultaneous, seemingly paradoxical inclusiveness and discrimination—defines American literature after the Civil War (Lutz 3). Advocated by influential figures including Andrew Carnegie and William James, cosmopolitanism promoted wide-ranging intellectual engagement and interaction independent of capitalist exploitation, a philosophy theoretically at odds with the brutal imperialism that defined William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt’s presidencies (Funchion 430). While imperialism’s international “outreach” sought to occupy foreign lands and bodies with profit as the ultimate goal, cosmopolitanism at its most idealistic promoted the construction and flowering of interconnections outside the demarked borders of states and nations.

The 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition, more commonly known as the World’s Fair, is perhaps the most significant cultural showcase of this commitment to

cosmopolitan production during the decades bracketing the turn of the twentieth century.³ A cornucopia of inclusive heterogeneity, the World's Fair featured carnival rides, world music, a plethora of grand buildings erected for the occasion, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, ships, locomotives, new food products, technological inventions, electricity exhibits, academic lectures, and even a "Street in Cairo" exhibit the length of a city block, with shops imitating Middle Eastern bazaars and gyrating belly dancers.⁴ "The Columbian Exposition," Evan I. Schwartz writes, "was as vast as the world itself, shrunk into microcosmic form, the past and future converging on the present moment" (221). In his autobiography *A Son of the Middle Border*, Hamlin Garland recalls a letter he wrote to his father, urging him to visit the Exposition: "Sell the cook stove if necessary and come. You must see this fair." Like Garland and countless other millions who visited and took part in the Exposition, L. Frank Baum was awed by this world made tangible, consumable, and accessible. The Exposition, in many ways, served as a backdrop and inspiration for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Schwartz and Katharine M. Rogers, among other Baum scholars, have argued that the World's Fair made an incalculable imprint on Baum's work; the architecture, beauty, and magic of the Emerald City, for example, mirrors what Baum experienced at the Columbian Exhibition. From this investment and celebration of cosmopolitanism, *Oz* emerges as a product of openness to difference, newness and variety.

³ The Columbian Exhibition was designed as a celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. This conflation of a cosmopolitan ethos with an imperialist history (and implicitly an imperialist present and future) perfectly captures the conflicting desires that define 1890s U. S. culture.

⁴ As this example illustrates, *fin de siècle* cosmopolitanism often promoted easily packaged, exotic, and consumable forms of difference that were often reductive.

This birth process may seem at fundamental odds with my identification of Baum's novel as regionalism. If *Oz* develops from and engages with a fundamentally cosmopolitan ethos, then how can it be simultaneously regional? How can a novel with cosmopolitan investments root itself in the ostensibly provincial region? This question assumes that the interests of cosmopolitanism and regionalism are diametrically opposed; that while cosmopolitanism advocates expansiveness, open engagement, and border crossings, regionalism seeks to look inward, turning away rather than towards discursive encounters. In his book *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value*, Tom Lutz convincingly argues that the accepted divergence of cosmopolitanism and regionalism is a false dichotomy. Regionalism, Lutz notes, "took as its prime subject the conflicting interests of specific populations and their values . . . [The central issue is] the relation of different groups to ongoing technological, economic, and social change, or, in other words, the relation of the region to the rest of the world" (15). Defined by its investment in movement, entrances, exits, discursive exchanges, and oscillations between different perspectives, literary regionalism is a fundamentally cosmopolitan practice, reflecting a multiplicity of desires and interests. Works of literary regionalism, from the subgenre's mid-nineteenth century inception to its continued production in the twenty-first century, serve as a mode of articulation for a plurality of voices, often in contention with provincial or insular ideologies. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse have argued that regionalism constitutes what Marjorie Garber terms a "category crisis," or a failure of definitional distinction, through its refusal to fix firm boundaries and borders. As Lutz shows through a careful and detailed journey through the use of the term "cosmopolitan," this idea cannot be reduced to an easily defined concept. Rather, cosmopolitanism serves

as a nexus for “dense, overlapping, overdetermined arguments, convictions, and confusions” animated by its multiple loyalties. Regionalism foregrounds a cosmopolitan politics that delights in the crossroad space and contact zone.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is, like regionalism written before it and after it, deeply cosmopolitan, existing at the intersection of multiple discourses and ideologies. Acknowledged widely as the first major American fantasy novel for children, *Oz*'s concerns and representations draw heavily on the traditions of realism and naturalism, bridging a wide and significant genre gap. In doing so, it redefines the concept of “region” as traditionally understood in U. S. literature, incorporating recognizable tropes of regional writing but suggesting, simultaneously, that regional space can be an imaginative, fanciful production. This genre crossing is not only over content, but through audience. Despite the common assumption—almost never questioned in scholarship—that regional writing's readers are exclusively adult, Baum shows us regionalism can be created for and marketed to children as well. Writing thirty years after the publication of *Oz*, famed regionalist Mary Austin claims that it is “the greatest mistake in the world not to recognize that children are . . . at heart the most confirmed regionalists,” arguing that they appreciate a “explicit, well mapped strip of country” as detailed as the landscape of their own local lives (102). Importantly, she identifies “the world of fairy adventure” as one of the most significant regional constructs, found almost exclusively in writing for children (103). Although Austin does not explicitly identify Baum or *Oz* in her essay, her willingness to defy common conservative understandings of regionalism as relegated to adult-marketed texts or rooted solely in maps of the United States is, in part, made possible by Baum's intervention into these debates.

It is easier to read *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as fantasy regionalism when we examine its similarities to Baum's earlier writing, which also hybridized the genres of regionalism and fantasy. Unlike *Oz*, however, which emphasizes the fantastic heavily and has less in common with recognizable regionalist tropes, this writing is somewhat less fantastic and more overtly regional, having clear roots in a specific locality with which Baum was deeply familiar. Ten years before *Oz*'s publication, Baum founded and operated a newspaper out of Aberdeen, South Dakota, having "come west in 1888 to make money . . . [and] stay[ing] to make fun of his fellow entrepreneurs" (Koupal 1). The "Our Landlady" columns—appearing weekly in the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer* from January 1890 through February 1891—indicate Baum's interest in the idiosyncrasies and everyday practices that define regional writing, an interest that would heavily influence his later fiction. "[L]ike other American authors," writes Nancy Tystad Koupal, "[Baum] used local settings and characters to focus on the larger human condition as it played itself out in one American community" (7). Each column features the opinionated Mrs. Sairy Ann Bilkins, who exchanges often outrageous and nearly always comical observations about Aberdeen citizens and events with her three boarders. Mrs. Bilkins speaks in a broad Yankee dialect that simultaneously indicates her class status and lack of formal education while indicating that she is not native to the region, a foreignness that defined the vast majority of Aberdeen's white residents. Like Sarah Orne Jewett's nameless Bostonian narrator in "The Country of the Pointed Firs," who enters the small town of Dunnet Landing, Maine, Mrs. Bilkins is from elsewhere, her presence a testimony to the volatility of the Dakota Territory contact zone. Local color writing, contrary to its reputation, almost always embraces translocality; a central motif in literary

regionalism is the introduction or intrusion of foreign characters into a local space and place.⁵ As Mrs. Bilkins's unstable and undefined status of belonging indicates, the "Our Landlady" columns have a nuanced relationship to place and space that foreshadows the oscillations performed by *Oz*'s multifaceted performance of region.

In an early column from February 1890, titled "She outdoes Nellie Bly and Makes a Trip around Aberdeen in 72 minutes and 6 seconds," Baum, with tongue firmly embedded in cheek, parodies the well-known globetrotting reporter's voyage by having his own heroine rush from home to home "to get subscriptions to supply the poor heathen women in Africanistan with hairpins" (30). Mrs. Bilkins relates her experiences to her boarders in a lengthy speech that gives the impression stopping for breath is not high on her list of priorities. Each Aberdonian she asks has a different opinion, which Mrs. Bilkins faithfully relates: "An' Ed Randall said if it was guage [sic] pins it might interest him, but hairpins didn't. An' Harvey Jewett wanted to know what kind of a snap it would be to send Dill out there with a cord o' clothspins [sic], an' Scott wanted me to cash a wheat check an' pay him the balance" (31). While traditionally scholars have footnoted the "Our Landlady" columns in favor of focus on Baum's more well-known works, what these sketches tells us is that well before he firmly established himself as a fantasy novelist for children, Baum was writing textbook literary regionalism. In other words, while we think today of Baum as a writer following in the footsteps of Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald, his early work has far more in common with the idiosyncratic

⁵ While this translocality is a defining aspect of the more well-known New England and Southern regionalism, particularly in regards to tourism, local color literature set west of Ohio is almost impossible to discuss without acknowledging the centrality of entrance and exit. For example, Great Plains and Western literature from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s focused almost exclusively on migration narratives.

village stories of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Sarah Orne Jewett. We have the homespun older female character without a visible husband or children who speaks in dialect, a deeply familiar standby in regional writing since before the Civil War, and perhaps *the* defining archetype in the subgenre, particularly in New England local color. Baum's format, too, is deeply regionalist, rejecting plot and a narrative arc for the light brevity of the sketch.⁶ Moreover, Baum's columns are almost impossible to understand fully without extensive footnotes, as each one referenced real persons, events, scandals, and organizations known exclusively to Aberdeen's citizens between 1890 and 1891. In order to truly appreciate Baum's humor, readers must have extensive knowledge of Aberdeen society during a two-year period. This is the local at its most severe. These qualities, however, do not alone make "Our Landlady" regional fiction. I've excerpted the Bly column in particular because it demonstrates effectively how the majority of Baum's columns consistently attend to both local and more global concerns. Here, he draws on readers' awareness of Nellie Bly's journey—a story reported across the world—to make a satirical, pointed comment about the inefficacies of white women's missionary societies, a concern both local to Aberdeen and presumably applicable to other outside communities. The fictional amalgam of "Africanistan," collapsing continent onto country in a violent parody of othering and essentialism, as well as Mrs. Bilkins's somewhat dubious idea of a beneficial cause, invites Baum's regional readers into a cosmopolitan conspiracy. The heteroglossia of the sketch is therefore not only in its

⁶ Fetterley and Pryse argue in *Writing Out of Place* that the sketch format is a defining element of regional writing, and that those who write plot-free sketches rather than intensely plotted novels are participating in an anti-hegemonic rejection of nineteenth-century literary norms. Certainly Baum eschewed any efforts to participate in the mainstream of fiction; the man who embraced regionalism, science fiction, and fantasy never received credit in his time as a "serious" or "literary" writer.

contention with local and global events, but in its implicit acknowledgement that Aberdonian readers have enough commerce with persons and events external to the region to get the joke.

Importantly, in the “Our Landlady” column, we encounter not only the beginnings of Baum’s engagement with regionalist tropes and concerns, but the production of a genre-crossing space that uses the locality of Aberdeen as a setting for speculative writing on the possibilities of the future. By January 1891, towards the end of the column’s run, Baum devoted his columns to imagining a near future that resembled a somewhat utopic society, where exponential advances in technology enabled Aberdeen’s residents to live happier and more fulfilled lives. While bearing more overt resemblance to the genre of science fiction than that of fantasy, these columns are nevertheless significant for the way they combine the concerns of regionalism and speculative fiction in a way that anticipates Baum’s paradigm-shifting construction of Kansas and Oz in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.⁷ In a column dated January 31st, 1891, Mrs. Bilkins reads aloud a supposedly prophetic letter she’d written in her sleep about the year 1895. In this near future, Aberdeen is now part of a newly declared state called Garden of Eden, “the most

⁷ While both science fiction and fantasy fall under the larger umbrella term of “speculative fiction,” which refers to any and all fiction that imagines realities different from any extant realities in the time of the writer, there are important differences I will take the time to note here. Writers and scholars have equivocated over how to distinguish between the two genres, but Canadian science fiction writer Robert J. Sawyer, in 2007, provides perhaps the most nuanced and effective separation. “Succinctly,” he writes, “there’s discontinuity between our reality and fantasy; there’s continuity between our reality and science fiction.” In other words, science fiction typically offers readers a reasonable or plausible path between the “now” of publishing time and the “then” of the storyworld. Fantasy, which often relies on supernatural elements rather than believable technologies, provides no such path, and does not depend on or develop established scientific knowledge to explain the existence of unfamiliar marvels. “Plausibility,” however, is a highly unstable term, and the 1890s—a decade in which the Columbian Exposition seemingly brought an improbable future to the present lives of millions of attendees—was a time where the seemingly implausible began to seem increasingly possible.

fertile an' productive land in the world . . . [that] pours its treasures into the city's marts."

Airships now transport travellers from one location to another, and there's been an invention called the "directory phonograph," which relays information to interested parties: "'Who's Mayor,' says I. 'Jim Davis, you fool,' says the phonograph" (*Our Landlady* 164). Notably, the "phone" is responsible for relaying specifically local information. Its annoyance with Mrs. Bilkins stems from her ignorance of Aberdeen's politics. In response to her hurt feelings over being called "fool," the "impident" [sic] phone proceeds to tell Mrs. Bilkins she's ignorant of Aberdeen's great men, and then provides her with a detailed list of political goings-on in the city, ending with a nod to the postmaster's busy schedule (*ibid*). This object works much like the iPhone's virtual assistant "Siri," capable of relaying a wealth of data to users in a conversational, casual, occasionally sarcastic voice. The scene's humor, however, stems in part from the gap between the phone's advanced technology and its decidedly prosaic purpose of use. In most speculative science fiction, technology usually indicates an investment in worldliness. Communication and information devices allow the relay of news and information without concern for geographic borders. Baum's phone privileges the local, communicating only information about Aberdeen and the immediate surrounding region. This satirical peek into the future—Baum's first real attempt at speculative fiction, predating the publication of *Oz* by nine years—effectively localizes the fantastic. While the Aberdeen of the coming years is an international, cosmopolitan metropolis, "airshipp[ing] [materials] to all parts of the world and also to Pierre," it is also deeply concerned with regional politics. In his final columns for the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, Baum invents a detailed otherworld defined simultaneously by its speculative elements

and by its attention to immediate, local concerns. His regionalism reaches out beyond realism and incorporates the distinctions and interests of the fantastic.

Like regionalism and cosmopolitanism, fantasy and cosmopolitanism share mutual interests. In the three *Pioneer* columns that look optimistically at the future world of Aberdeen, the fictional inventions Baum creates are universally ones that bring together heterogeneous populations. His air-ships are not only agents of convenience but vehicles of cosmopolitan contact: “If a feller wants to explore Africa he can do it with neatness and dispatch in his air-ship. If he wants ter go ter the North Pole he can do so—pervedid [sic] he don’t freeze” (167). While the technology Baum anticipates is barely even science fiction—the Wright Brothers’ first flight was just twelve years away—Mrs. Bilkins’s expectations are more aligned with the impossibilities of fantasy than with the possibilities of science fiction, foreseeing a near future in which the average “feller” would have the disposable capital to easily purchase an air-ship of his own. Noticeably, the desire associated with this fantasy aligns itself with travel and a cosmopolitan adventure. As Mrs. Bilkins suggests, one uses an air-ship to explore Africa or go to the North Pole. One presumably does not use an air-ship to visit one’s cousin in De Smet. If identification with the region can also be fundamentally cosmopolitan, looking simultaneously inward and outward, the appeal of fantasy also employs a cosmopolitan ethos. Reading fantasy literature is about encountering and consuming a cornucopia of otherness. What makes the “Our Landlady” columns so appealing is the way they balance this consumption of otherness with the pleasure of familiarity, as epitomized by the local directory phonograph. The fantastic in Baum’s writing not only encompasses the strange but also the deeply recognizable and immediate.

As his final columns in the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer* suggest, Baum had a keen interest in the shocks and innovation native to speculative fiction. Certainly the landscapes of the West surrounding him no longer promised the novelty they might have held even twenty years previously. By the 1890s, the U.S. government had accepted Dakota Territory into the union as two separate states, North and South Dakota. Aberdeen became a thriving metropolis with four different railroad depots, not a remote western outpost but a small city hub. At the turn of the century the fabled West—long mythologized by white Easterners as empty land waiting to be tamed—was heavily pockmarked with settlers, the ground plowed, furrowed, and sectioned from California to Montana to Texas to Ohio. In 1893, just two years after Baum left Aberdeen, Frederick Jackson Turner announced the closing of the Western frontier at the Columbian Exposition. In light of this conclusion to territorial manifest destiny, new ideological and industrial frontiers of technology, literature, and thought now signified the future, and it was these frontiers towards which Baum turned his focus. The final “Our Landlady” column closes with Mrs. Bilkins’s hopeful predictions for useful inventions to make human beings’ lives easier. “[T]hese things’ll all be found out as the country progresses,” she promises her tenants and Baum’s readers (168). This same passion for advancement and modernity saturates the brief introduction at the beginning of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, emphasizing the importance of forging ahead. In three short paragraphs, Baum declares war on time and tradition, writing a manifest destiny for children’s literature and American literature in the twentieth century:

[. . .] Yet the old-time fairy tale, having served for generations, may now be classed as “historical” in the children’s library; for the time has come for a series of newer “wonder tales” in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf,

and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and blood-curdling incident devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder-tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident.

Having this thought in mind, the story of “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” was written solely to pleasure children of today. It aspires to being a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heart-aches and nightmare are left out.

With this introduction, Baum draws a deep chronological and substantive line in the sand of children’s literature, placing himself on one side and all other stories “fantastic, marvelous and manifestly unreal” on the other. Fantasy for children, he argues, should eschew the didactic, as lessons and morality are the province of the educational sphere. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is not simply a fantasy story but a *modernized* fairy tale, implying that modernity can influence, even feed the production of the fantastic. The importance of this introduction to Baum’s novel and its contexts cannot be overstated. Notably, Baum defines modernized fantasy entirely by its purpose—to delight—rather than its style, form, or content. For my purposes in this chapter, I am less interested in what Baum believes *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* actually does, and more concerned with the ways his “modernized fairy tale” thrives at the nexus of a new cultural and literary debate at the turn of the century about place-centered American literature.⁸ In his introduction, and in the pages that follow, Baum implicitly argues for the importance and inclusion of children’s writing in this debate over literature’s purposes, as scholars and

⁸ The “heart-aches and nightmare” Baum intends to eliminate from his modern fantasy are nevertheless still very much a significant part of *Oz*, one very good reason not to allow his definition of “modernized fairy tale” to rest unexamined. The body horror of the Tin Woodman’s story, among other examples, is intensely disturbing; he reveals to Dorothy and the Scarecrow that his tin body is the result of a spell that made his own axe slip during wood-chopping and cut off his human leg, arms, and head. Years later, the 1939 adaptation would horrify generations of child viewers with grotesque flying monkeys and Margaret Hamilton’s deliciously scenery-chewing performance as the Wicked Witch of the West. No incarnation of *Oz* has ever been without nightmarish elements.

writers of American fiction—particularly those who spent significant time east of Ohio—began to question the Eastern-centric and hierarchical system of literary production. By crying “out with the old and in with the new,” Baum joins a rising call for a reconsideration of American literature’s geographic hegemony not only through the publication of his thoroughly Midwestern book, but through his implicit demand that children’s literature be considered a part of this developing revolution.

Central to this attempt at geographic and critical alignment was Great Plains regionalist Hamlin Garland, whose rise to literary fame predated Baum’s by less than a decade. A son of the Midwest who lived for some time in Dakota Territory before pursuing a writing career in Boston, Garland was a fierce champion of what he called “veritism,” or truth in art, an ideal only achieved through the production of local color literature.⁹ Although critics panned his early novels, Garland gained entry into literary social circles through his friendship with the well-known and respected realist William Dean Howells. By the early years of the 1890s Garland had achieved a fairly significant reputation in the realist community as an intellectual whose thoughts about the direction and purpose of U. S. fiction were worth consideration. On the final day of the Literary Congress at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, Garland achieved his most significant platform to date, replacing Thomas Nelson Page at the last minute on a roster that included George Washington Cable and romance novelist Mary Hartwell

⁹ Garland seems to use the word “veritism” interchangeably with “realism”; at different points in *Crumbling Idols* he refers to the “realist or veritist” (52, 109), and defines both as the perception and “stating [of] truth in an individual way, irrespective of past models . . . progress in art” (96). While he does not make it explicit why he feels the need to coin a neologism, Garland’s privileging of realism and regionalism is in what he perceives as those areas’ interest in truth and accuracy, and so perhaps the term “veritism” is intended to specifically emphasize that element.

Catherwood.¹⁰ In his talk, “Local Color in Fiction,” Garland argued that the survival and flourishing of American literature depended on the endurance of local color writing, prizing a focus on the sincerity of the everyday over dramatic highs and lows.

Catherwood, who valued the pursuit of the dramatic in literature, or what she termed the “stress of loving, suffering, doing,” took issue with Garland’s approach and vociferously defended the old guard of American and British literature she perceived as being attacked (Glider). This debate, which Catherwood and Garland continued in the columns of the *Chicago Record*, and which expanded as the Eastern press began to take note, won Garland few friends and several enemies (Newlin 178-81). Stoking the flames of this literary civil war, which was divided along Eastern and Western lines rather than Northern and Southern, Garland blasted his dismissive critics in an 1893 article in the well-respected national magazine *Forum*, “Literary Emancipation of the West,” drawing not only stylistic distinctions but chronological ones: “The West [tells the East]: Keep your past. Hug your [historical] tablets to your shirt-front; you are welcome to all that; we are concerned with the present, and with the splendor of the future. Your culture is too largely of the moribund . . . The study of the past does little for original genius” (163).¹¹

As Michael Patrick Hearn notes, Baum openly subscribed to Garland’s revolutionary attempt to re-center literary production around Chicago rather than Boston

¹⁰ There is no evidence that Baum was in attendance at this particular panel, but biographers have placed him at the Exposition during the month of July, when the Literary Congress was held. It is entirely possible, even if Baum did not attend the panel, that he was aware of it.

¹¹ Unsurprisingly, Eastern print outlets aligned themselves with Catherwood’s relatively conservative position. The *New York Times* eviscerated Garland in a scathing editorial on September 26, 1893, responding directly to “Literary Emancipation of the West.” The editorial argued that Chicago had as yet produced no literature worth the name and that “the West” was still crude and provincial: “[T]he Western writers, if any there be, would be very much better employed in producing some literature than in talking tall and empty.” (At this point, Garland had already published four novels, a collection of short stories, and a play.)

or New York. “The West,” he informed the *Syracuse Post-Standard* in June 1900, “is rapidly growing as a literary center . . . Chicago excels all other cities for fine printing, and the time is coming when many good books will be published and read there” (6). Baum’s publisher for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was the George M. Hill Company out of Chicago, and so this boast to an East Coast newspaper that names Chicago as the new center of Western literature is in large part self-promotion, an attempt to legitimize the roots of his work’s production. Nevertheless, the statement indicates a vested interest in realignment. In light of these comments on the significance of Chicago to American literature in the new twentieth century, and the greater literary debate taking place in U.S. literary circles between the old guard of the East and the upstarts of the West, Baum’s introduction to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* subsequently acquires greater resonance. The introduction never once refers explicitly to place, geography, America, the East, or the West, but when understood as a product of historical and cultural context, is inextricable from the regional and political landscape of American literature at the turn of the century. In staking a position that overtly rejects historical genre representations for new, modern ones, Baum implicitly aligns himself with a rebellious faction defined in large part by its fealty to geographic diversity and regional representation. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, therefore, is firmly in conversation not only with earlier works of Victorian fantasy for children, but with critical divisions in realist circles over how and where American literature would develop in the new century.

While Garland’s writings provide important political context for *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s engagement with modernity, region, and a cosmopolitan novelty, it is perhaps the bleak descriptions of the prairie in Garland’s short stories that most overtly

parent the local color of *Oz*'s first chapter. The parallels are explicit. In addition to sharing similar views on the importance of the West to American literature, Baum and Garland were both former residents of the Dakotas, Garland in the early part of the 1880s, Baum from 1888-1891, just as the territory split into two states. Many of Garland's short stories take place in South Dakota, and like Garland, it is arguably his impressions of South Dakota Baum writes in the first pages of *Oz*, not Kansas.¹² Keith Newlin observes in his biography of Garland that the Dakotan landscape "was like nothing [the young Garland] had ever seen—flat, treeless, empty of all life save short grass prairie and birds" (52). Garland constantly emphasizes the bare canvas of the northern prairies in his own literature, writing in *A Son of the Middle Border* (1917) that the country was "without a tree to break its sere expanse," and in "The Moccasin Ranch" that the "level, treeless plain" was decorated only by a "thin scarf of morning cloud." In the dedication to perhaps his most well-known work, *Main-Travelled Roads*, Garland acknowledges "My Father and Mother Whose Half-Century Pilgrimage on the Main-Travelled Road of Life Has Brought Them Only Toil and Deprivation," and describes his father's farm in Ordway, South Dakota, "where I found my mother imprisoned in a small cabin on the enormous sunburned, treeless plain, with no expectation of ever living

¹² Scholarship is divided over whether or not Baum's description of Kansas prairies in *Oz* is in fact a description of Dakotan prairies, but perhaps the most convincing evidence comes from *Oz* Club secretary Fred M. Meyer, referenced in Hearn's *The Annotated Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy observes in a later *Oz* sequel that snow in August would spoil Uncle Henry's wheat crops. While South Dakotans usually gather their wheat in August, Kansans typically harvest their wheat in June or July (Hearn 15). Nancy Tystad Koupal vehemently rejects this transference theory because, as she argues, Baum's bleak Kansas in no way resembles the comparatively dynamic Western metropolis that Aberdeen became in the later half of the 1880s when Baum lived there (ix). Although the disparity between Baum and Garland's experiences in the Dakotas is significant, it still seems likely that Baum used the experiences of the Carpenters in North Dakota and his own knowledge of South Dakota outside Aberdeen as direct inspiration for the naturalist descriptions of Uncle Henry and Aunt Em's failing homestead.

anywhere else.” In many of his descriptions, Garland’s Dakota Territory is bleak and rejecting, its expansive, flat prairies a sea of frightening sameness.

Baum, who lived in Aberdeen, South Dakota for three years, presumably had some personal knowledge of the environment Garland describes so memorably. However, there are significant differences between the two men’s experiences of Dakota Territory: Aberdeen by the late 1880s and early 1890s was a relatively well-established small city, with brick stores, hotels, raised sidewalks, and even limited telegraphic and electric service. Baum’s experiences there were decidedly affected by the number of opportunities and amenities afforded to residents of a significant regional distribution center (Rogers 20). However, Baum’s sister-in-law, Julia Gage Carpenter, and her husband Frank, had a homesteading experience in North Dakota several years before Baum’s residency in Aberdeen that closely resembles the real-life trials of Garland’s parents and the fictional ones of Uncle Henry and Aunt Em. Like the severely modest home built by Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, the Carpenters’ homestead was a tiny shack, “just twelve by twelve feet, built with lumber carted by wagon over the treeless plains” (Rogers 118). The Carpenters’ considerable efforts to establish themselves on the land resulted in failure. Julia Carpenter, who kept a detailed journal during these years, passionately hated the rejecting environment, unable to cope with their total isolation on the prairie and the temperatures that fluctuated wildly on a daily basis. Their experiences on the land stripped every bit of happiness from the Carpenters’ lives, eventually driving Frank to alcoholism and Julia into mental illness. The opening of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has roots in all these productions and histories: Garland’s Great Plains regionalism, Julia Gage Carpenter’s tortured misery, Baum’s own experiences writing South Dakota

local color, and Garland's call for a uniquely American literature that reflected everyday practices with sincerity and plainness.

Baum famously begins with a vivid description of the Kansas landscape where Dorothy, Uncle Henry, and Aunt Em live:

Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles . . . When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else. (1)

Like the Carpenters' homestead, Uncle Henry and Aunt Em assemble their house with lumber from distant locations, a detail Baum almost certainly took from his in-laws' experiences. Like Julia Carpenter, who famously blamed her poor eyesight late in life on "looking so hard across the prairie for another human being," Dorothy stares outwards, the reader's perspective of the surrounding plains achieved through her searching gaze (Hearn 16).¹³ Baum's description of the intolerant environment mirrors that of Garland and countless other Great Plains regionalists, emphasizing the nearly unbearable weight of absence that always overwhelms the timid presence of the homestead. "The creation of place is not a simple act for the plains pioneer," writes Diane Quantic, and although Baum never explicitly indicates that the homestead is failing, its meager smallness gives the impression of transience rather than solidity, a building fated to be swept up by a cyclone of barren poverty and lonely, unforgiving landscape. This interplay between

¹³ This gaze anticipates and shapes the child-focused narrative to come. Baum does not simply describe the homestead's setting, but shows it through Dorothy's eyes; her gaze is the impetus for the description, in much the same way as her actions in the Land of Oz help shape the regional fantasy environment.

absence and presence, nature and human, is a critical aspect of Great Plains literature. By explicitly playing up that tension, Baum inserts his story into a genealogy of naturalist, regionalist fiction, undermining preconceptions that fantasy literature does not and cannot engage with other genres.

In much the same way that Mari Sandoz, Ole Rølvaag, and Laura Ingalls Wilder would later depict the Great Plains with language as stark as the setting, the simple lexicon Baum uses rejects rhetorical curlicues or embellishment in favor of clear, simple words that stamp an indelible picture. *Gray* is the essential concept in these opening paragraphs, defining land, people, and language. The narrator notes that the sun and wind have not only blistered the ground and grass, but Aunt Em, too, taking color from her until her skin and eyes are as gray as the land itself. Uncle Henry is gray as well, “from his long beard to his rough boots,” and both adults’ personalities match their colorlessness; neither laugh nor smile (3). Only the colorful Dorothy escapes the hegemony of monochrome, saved from her by her youth and her dog, Toto, and her “merry voice” often startles Aunt Em to the point of screaming. This opening description is naturalist local color at its most literal, Baum’s focus on the gray landscape and gray people a kind of teasing nod to the name by which regionalism, at the turn of the century, was best known: the term Hamlin Garland memorably used to describe it. If “local color” at the turn of the century typically referred to literature enhanced or made more visible by its attention to regional peculiarities, Baum’s opening descriptions subvert that definition, stressing the violence of absence rather than the lure of difference. While I have so far used “regionalism” to represent *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*’s engagement with place

and space, this novel's emphasis on chromaticity makes it imperative to think about the ways it also functions specifically as local *color*.¹⁴

Illustrating with his words rather than simply describing, Baum indicates from the beginning of *Oz* that his lens is a painterly one, in much the same way that contemporaries Hamlin Garland and Stephen Crane use color to create a dimensional and vivid literary experience. Hues and shades in these paragraphs become shorthand for characterization and setting. We know Aunt Em and Uncle Henry are depleted figures not simply because they act a certain way, but because their bodies are literally gray, signifying the lack of a life force they used to possess. Time and age are significant to this growth of grayness, as Aunt Em was once a “young, pretty wife” who had “sparkle [in] her eyes” and “red [in] her cheeks and lips” (2), the bright color serving as an indicator of youth. Readers do not learn in these first pages what Dorothy's colors are, but we know she, like her black dog Toto, is not gray. The absence of grayness is nearly as significant as its presence. Although Baum's use of color to indicate age might seem simplistic, a derivative and unsubtle metaphor, it carries with it a series of complex contextual referents. Color inevitably summons the concept of local color when

¹⁴ There exists a major debate in regionalist scholarship over the use of the term “local color.” As one of the first scholars of literary regionalism, Hamlin Garland used the phrase “local color” exclusively to refer to literature of a certain immediate place, but over the decades of the twentieth century others employed it in increasingly dismissive ways. “Local color” became shorthand among American literary scholars for writing that lacked compelling interest for readers outside prurient curiosity. In much recent criticism, scholars sidestep the phrase “local color” entirely in favor of regionalism; for example, a 2008 essay collection, *Regionalism and the Humanities*, contains only four brief references to local color. The turn towards what's become known, in the last decade, as “critical regionalism” may have something to do with this. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse have famously attempted to draw a distinction between the terms “local color” and “regionalism,” arguing that local color literature is insular and provincial, uninterested in examining or defying categorical constructs, while regionalism does critical, complex, and discursive literary work. They do not, however, give a clear reason for applying the label “local color” to provincial literature—other than the historical propensity of regionalism's critics to dismiss regional writing as local color—and therefore I do not adopt this distinction here.

foregrounded in a setting nearly universal to a particular regional fiction. Among other areas of critical concern, local color is traditionally invested in constructs of time, often engaging with, reproducing, or critiquing the relationship of imagined or mythic regional pasts to present realities and uncertain futures.¹⁵ The use of color to indicate age and chronology in the Kansas setting works on multiple levels. Its presence is a deft nod to a regionalist tradition that equates “local color” with a kind of tourism back into (imagined) time. It also functions as acknowledgement of an important cultural shift at the turn of the century towards the increasing use of color in daily American life. With the advent of new technologies of reproduction, the old grays of yesteryear began to give way to the new shocks of bright tints.¹⁶

If the heated debate between conservative Eastern fiction and an avant-garde Western fiction defined the geographic stakes of American literature at the turn of the century, considerable attention to color and changing attitudes towards its significance helped shape the broader production of American culture during the same years. In the latter years of the nineteenth century, advances in the production of synthetic dyes enabled architects, merchants, clothing manufacturers, and newspapers to foreground vivid and varied colors in their materials, as color became less expensive to reproduce accurately (Gaskill 720-21). William Henry Perkin’s aniline dye introduced the color mauve, staining even the nickname for the period: the Mauve Decade. Color splashed not

¹⁵ Critics of literary regionalism often point to certain ur-texts of the genre, particularly works of New England regional writing, as reproducing a kind of tourism for readers that not only transports them to another location, but to another time: a bucolic past. While many regional stories, sketches, and novels present the space of the local as other to external environments, these texts are often more concerned with a multidirectional timeline than their critics give them credit for, posing questions about the local’s engagement with other contemporary places, as well as concern regarding the survival of the local in an uncertain future.

¹⁶ Gray has another meaning when considered within a spectrum of black-and-white; gray can imply shading, gradients, a productive space outside the binary.

only into fashion and advertisement, but into art and education. The literary journal *The Yellow Book* turned heads in the 1890s; Pablo Picasso embarked on his Blue Period as the century turned; Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" was published in 1892. Children, too, were a central part of this development. After 1895, schools integrated the arts more extensively into primary and secondary education; teachers encouraged students to express themselves using colored chalk, crayons, and paper, made more readily and cheaply available as a result of these developments in technology (Leach 156). Some of the most popular works for children during this time period were Andrew Lang's Fairy Books, published between 1889 and 1910 and famously rainbowed, each volume distinguished by a different color: the Blue Book, the Red Book, the Green Book. This flowering of color had a profound effect on the relationship between Americans' awareness of self and their interactions with the materials they consumed. As Stephen Gaskill argues, "the range of color innovations at the end of the nineteenth century did not simply endow the existing visual environment with brighter tones; they also provided the sensory constituents of a new economic order and shifted the materials through which individual selves were formulated and expressed" (8-9).

The new centrality of color in many areas of cultural life at the dawn of the twentieth century enabled artists to play with representations of reality, using color not only as metaphor but as gateway to a new kind of perception. Stephen Crane's late nineteenth-century novels are famously concerned with the use of color, and his prose, like other forms of contemporary cultural production, "investigates the conceptual experience of color . . . creat[ing] textual spaces that enable new perceptual encounters" (Gaskill 722). Crane disregards the generally muted shadings of the natural world in

favor of high saturations; his brilliant blues and bloody reds challenge the everyday experiences of acceptable visual reality. Like Baum's *Land of Oz*, Crane's landscapes deny subtle reflections of color, and like Baum's *Kansas*, Crane's employment of color's language encompasses the visual and the emotive, the physical presence and the felt quality, the gray sky and the gray woman grayed with misery. Gray is a color on a spectrum that includes the green of the Emerald City, the blue of Munchkin Territory, the white of the Good Witches, and the yellow of the brick road. We should not and cannot wholly separate *Kansas* from *Oz*, the dull from the bright, the "real" from the "fantasy." In arguing that Baum is writing literary regionalism in the *Land of Oz* as well as in *Kansas*, I am also explicitly arguing that set borders between distinct genres hurt rather than facilitate productive readings. The interests of realism and fantasy are not entirely at odds with one another. The fantasy space can be a regional cosmopolitan production, and none of those terms inherently contradict the others. Ostensibly divergent literary categories, in other words, often bleed into one another like runny dyes; color not only provides the simile here, but serves as an important link between the genres of realism and Baum's fantasy. In many ways, the explicit quality of Stephen Crane's saturated colors unequivocally deny the restraint of actual human perception, favoring an aesthetic of extremes that verges on the fantastic. Crane brings "writing into an encounter with the visual arts," using the possibilities colors suggest to expand conceptual understandings of lived experiences (Gaskill 739). Although no one has ever labeled Crane's work fantasy—he sets his novels in recognizable places and spaces contemporary or prior to the moment of publication—there are distinct parallels between his attempts to play with visual perception and Baum's imaginative productions. Both Crane and Baum use color

to construct a reality not bounded by the limits of signification but by the power of visual representation to conjure a dimensional experience.

Color, perception, and local color are also intrinsic to Hamlin Garland's philosophy of veritism. Garland often embraces natural, visual images, like Crane, but Garland uses these images specifically to produce a sense of local place or to argue for the significance of locality. In his 1895 collection of essays, *Crumbling Idols*, Garland's metaphors are intensely vivid and flushed, emphasizing color. "We have but to examine the ground closely," he argues, "and we see the green shoots of the coming harvest beneath our very feet" (54). Other colorful images in *Crumbling Idols* include the "gold fields" and "salt, green, snow-tipped ocean surf" that inspired Pacific localism, the "cotton-boll" and the bloody fields of the South, the flowering corn of the Midwest. In advocating for local color writing, Garland uses color and colorful elements to evoke regional distinction, a practice Baum would adopt five years after the essay collection's publication. Garland's fiction is no less dyed and color no less significant to its localisms; *Main-Travelled Roads*, perhaps his most famous collection of short stories, uses the word "green" forty-one times, "blue" thirty-eight, "brown" thirty-six, "yellow" thirty-four, "white" thirty-one, "red" thirty, and "black" twenty-nine. Color lends hue and depth to Garland's descriptions, and his natural environments are never far away from a tinted adjective. Readers are incapable of scanning a line of Garland's without tripping over his box of crayons: "[He listened] to the delicious liquid note of a blackbird swinging on the willow. Red lilies starred the grass with fire, and goldenrod and chicory grew everywhere; purple and orange and yellow-green the prevailing tints." This emphasis on color, for Garland, was intrinsic to his concept of veritism. "True" literature, according to

the definition of veritism, values the individual's perceptive senses. Subjective sense creates the only possible truth: the truth of personal experience. Garland prioritized visual color perhaps above all other sensory elements as an facet of locality that connected the observer to her immediate space; this relationship between individual and local perception was, for Garland, profoundly significant. Through visual perception, local color became truly—not metaphorically—both local and colorful; local environments could, in large part, be distinguished and reproduced in literature through description of their various tints. Intriguingly, locality in Garland's theory begins in the writer's youth. The local color writer, he claimed, used "all the associations of [his] childhood. . . to make that web of common affairs, threads of silver and beads of gold; the near-at-hand things are the dearest and sweetest after all" (*Crumbling Idols* 64). Like Crane, Garland foregrounds color in order to produce space, but while Crane emphasizes color's ability to shape the fantastic, Garland makes a case for it as an agent of veritism and locality stemming from childhood.

In many ways, Baum's fascination with color and his use of it in connection with locality mirrors Garland's literary efforts, expanding on them to consider how childhood enters into this colorful manufacture of regional space. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is famously colorful, both in description and in design. Hues are the primary distinction between the book's different landscapes, and readers come across 120 two-color illustrations and twenty-three full-color plates as they turn the pages. Despite scholars' desire to read this use of color as metaphorical or commentarial, its presence in the text has more to do with an extensive cultural practice in the late nineteenth century that began to actively cultivate color production as intrinsic to healthy childhood

development. Nicholas Gaskill argues that W. W. Denslow's famously bright illustrations are born out of turn-of-the-century findings in developmental psychology that bright colors helped stimulate children: "[C]hild psychologists . . . crystallized an image of the child's experience of color as pre-linguistic, free of conceptual taint, prior to form, and attracted to shades of basic hues" (164). Denslow, according to contemporary art critic J. M. Bowles, uses colors particularly well suited to the child's eye, creating an art Bowles identifies as "impressionis[m] for babies" (ibid).¹⁷ The presence of pictorial color in *Oz* gains additional richness when we consider it not as simple allegory, but as a link in the chain of conversation between text and viewer. As Dorothy becomes a social actor through her engagement with the localities of Oz, her vivid sensory impressions of these local places and spaces become transferred to child readers, who likewise participate in this act of seeing color: an immersive experience that allows them to imagine sharing in Dorothy's emerging agency.

Even a cursory glance at the two-color illustrations in *Oz* reveals that Denslow reproduces—whether intentionally or unintentionally—Baum's lexical investment in sketching immediate detail through chromaticity. The pictures on nearly every other page are, much like Hamlin Garland's work, literally local color: tightly framed drawings of actions, interactions, and scenes that evoke a sense of closeness, always defined by a single, prominent hue that interacts with a precise black-and-white ink sketch. Very few of these illustrations depict an environment that a child is incapable of accessing, and

¹⁷ Bowles labeling Denslow an impressionist is intriguing, although almost certainly a tongue-in-cheek designation, designed to make readers smile at the juxtaposition between "serious" artistry and children's media. In one sense, Bowles is accurate; like the impressionists, Denslow separates his colors, almost never mixing. However, impressionist painting neglects detail, using context to build a sense of its subjects, and Denslow uses clear, dark, and unmistakable lines in his work with very little shading or blotting: a technique entirely divorced from impressionism.

there is only one landscape panorama shown in the entire book. Despite the size and breadth of Oz, a kingdom we know from this book and from others to be immensely vast, each picture Denslow offers is the still equivalent of a close-up, giving the impression of highly specific locality. The vast majority of the two-color illustrations have a clear visual relationship with the text itself, and while some drawings nestle at the bottom or in the corner of the page with no overlap between word and image, other drawings leak around and behind the printed word, spreading out across full pages with words printed in front, and forcing readers and viewers to take both into account. As in picture books written for younger viewers, word and image in *Oz* interact together; Denslow and Baum make it difficult for those who engage with the book to isolate one from the other. The full-color plates, while not as strikingly “localized” as the relatively sparse two-color illustrations, nevertheless suggest a similar investment in close, accessible spaces. They portray the novel’s events in a way that is in no way cinematic or sweeping, often foregrounding the personal by centering in on Dorothy’s actions or reactions to those she encounters. Traditionally, regional literature embraces the personal and interpersonal, emphasizing it while allowing larger cultural and political concerns to remain quietly in the background. While the layout of the two-color images on the pages with printed words evokes a sense of locality through their literal marginalization, the full page multi-color illustrations produce locality through their depiction of emotionally resonant interpersonal moments.

On the first pages of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* preceding the onset of the story, the text blends with the image, as it does in many other places throughout the rest of the novel. The Tin Man stands and reads the tiny copyright text, and Toto sits up, eyes wide,

paws bent in a begging position, mouth open, at a corner of the introduction. The background on these two pages is a dark pink, cornered off so that white margins of the page remain. Several pages later, the Scarecrow reads a sheet of paper too long to be a book page, the text on it (if there is any) not visible to the reader. To the left of the Scarecrow, a List of Chapters appears. Again, pink serves as the text's backdrop.¹⁸

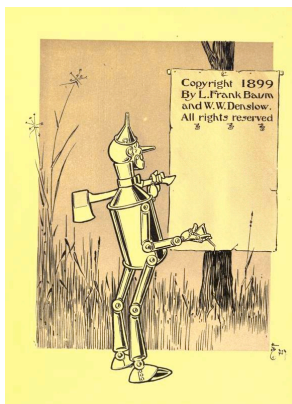


Figure 1: The Tin Man Reads, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

The shock of pink enveloping Denslow's illustrations on these pages is a warm and eye-catching color just natural enough to seem familiar but bold enough to intrigue. It demands the readers' attention and effectively promises a textual space designed to invite in child readers receptive to bright colors.¹⁹ Through careful design, Baum and Denslow set the visual stage for the lexical content to come, blurring lines between ostensibly set categories. The very first image—the Tin Man gazing at the copyright information, his back to the reader/viewer—playfully dismantles the separation between the book as a

¹⁸ It is tempting to associate the use of pink here with femininity, specifically that of the novel's protagonist Dorothy, but when *Oz* was first published pink had no particular association with a single gender. The assignment of pink to girls and blue to boys did not become culturally entrenched in the United States until the 1940s.

¹⁹ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, cartographers traditionally used pink on maps to represent the British Empire. There is no way of knowing whether or not Denslow considered this association when choosing which color to illustrate the beginning pages of *Oz*. Nevertheless, it's intriguing that the first work of American fantasy for children—which bears a clear debt to British Victorian fantasy—begins with a color firmly associated with Great Britain.

vehicle for storytelling and the book as a manufactured thing with a history and circulation, suggesting that the line between the two is a porous one. Perhaps even more importantly, the Tin Man is modeling the act that Baum and Denslow's child audience will shortly be doing—reading—and thereby drawing attention to the significance of that action. Baum and Denslow imply that reading *Oz* is as significant as what happens within the world of *Oz*. While this interplay between text, context, and reader in and of itself does not produce locality, it signals the text's awareness that other textualities exist external to the story itself, indicating that the book is in conversation not only with itself and with its readers, but its contexts—which include an increasingly regionalized literary culture. It is no accident that the page facing the one featuring the Tin Man contains Baum's introduction, announcing the era of the “modernized fairy tale.” The Tin Man's act of reading, which distorts an ostensibly set division between the interior space of the text and the exterior space of the text, indirectly complements Baum's introduction: a manifesto for a new kind of children's literature that gestures towards the content of the novel to come and acknowledges a larger literary framework of which *Oz* is a small part. Toto's wide stare, the focal point of the illustration accompanying the introduction, underline the significance here of seeing and reading. On the next page, also dark pink, the Scarecrow examines a long sheet of paper while the book's list of chapters appears to his right. Like the Tin Man, the Scarecrow is reading; like Toto, his eyes are wide. *Pay attention*, Baum and Denslow are telling their audience. *Look carefully. You are entering new land.*

Readers might expect gray or otherwise dull colors to mark the illustrations of *Oz*'s first pages, detailing Dorothy's home life in Kansas, and in fact one of the two

dominant colors in this chapter is predictably wan, the shade of pale Caucasian skin. Denslow renders the frontispiece—a two-page illustration depicting the small family shack lifted off the ground by a funnel—in this wan color, and it seems appropriate. The text and its emphasis on gray supports a visual depiction that emphasizes dust and dreariness; the expanse of watery peach resembles hot baked, dusty ground. Color and content harmonize. On the beginning page of the first chapter, however, the color readers encounter is not the expected pale flesh, but that now-familiar dark pink with which Denslow and Baum introduce the novel.

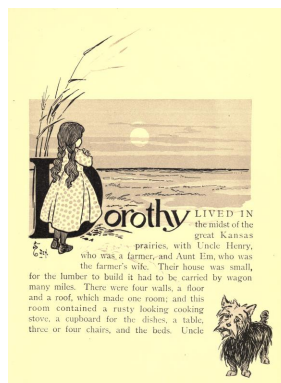


Figure 2: Dorothy in Kansas, *Oz*

Dorothy gazes out onto “the great gray prairie on every side [with] not a tree nor a house [to break] the broad sweep of flat country that reached the edge of the sky in all directions” (12). Nothing is gray, everything is pink: Dorothy’s hair (elsewhere brown), Dorothy’s dress (white with pink polka dots; elsewhere blue and white), Dorothy’s stockings and shoes, Toto, and the landscape itself, prairie and sky stained with a deep blush. This color choice is even more striking given the following page, which features a tightly constricted rendering of the house’s doorway, depicting with fidelity Baum’s description using the pale peach and black colors: “Uncle Henry sat upon the door-step

and looked anxiously at the sky, which was even grayer than usual. Dorothy stood in the door with Toto in her arms, and looked at the sky too. Aunt Em was washing the dishes” (13). The focus is on Henry and Dorothy’s worried expressions rather than the wide expanse of prairie or sky. Viewers do not see the landscape, and instead the only spread of dark space is the view inside Henry, Em, and Dorothy’s home, a black backdrop against which Aunt Em washes her dishes. Several sunflowers speckle the outer edges of the drawing, although Baum never refers to a single plant or flower.

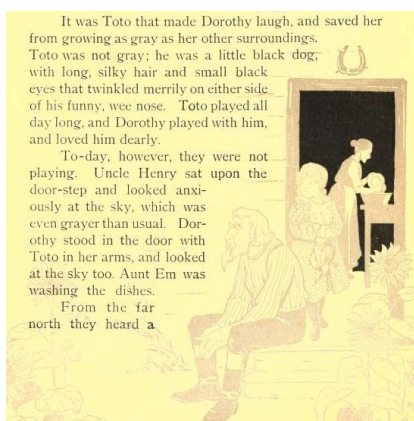


Figure 3: Uncle Henry, Dorothy, and Aunt Em, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Both of these illustrations are in many ways extraordinarily faithful in reproducing the text they accompany, and there is a unambiguous and clear relationship between words and image that seems to underpin the famously stark simplicity of Baum’s language. However, I read Denslow’s choices as provocative and complex rather than straightforward, duplicitous in their seeming austerity. There are important differences between what Denslow illustrates and what Baum writes. These differences do not subvert Baum’s story, as we might expect from images that differ in important ways from what they are meant to depict, but rather isolate or draw out significant textual and contextual elements that give *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* its dimensionality. The

only difference between the first illustration of Dorothy gazing out towards the prairie and the words Denslow represents is the color Denslow uses: pink rather than gray, a choice so starkly opposing that it demands attention. In the second illustration showing Henry, Em, and Dorothy, the colors more closely resemble Baum's description, but the image chooses not to show the graying sky prompting Henry and Dorothy's anxiety, instead training closely on the family and their activities. Unlike the first illustration, Denslow makes no explicit changes to Baum's words, but arguably the most significant part of these three sentences is the looming threat of the forthcoming cyclone, the catalyst for the novel's events.

I have argued previously that while scholars tend to focus primarily in their readings of this novel on the differences between Kansas and the Land of Oz, the perceived divide between realism and fantasy, cosmopolitanism and regionalism, local color and the colorful local is nowhere near as great as has been assumed. *Oz* in fact blurs the borders between these distinctions, showing that fantasy can incorporate the concerns of realism, regionalism can in fact be cosmopolitan, and a fantastic space where magical events occur can, in many ways, function as regionalism. By coloring the gray prairie and gray sky a deep pink, Denslow effectively connects the story to the pages preceding the story, linking context to text. Dorothy's Kansas is inextricable from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz's* critical framework and position in the battle for Western literary significance. This deep pink also appears extensively in illustrations depicting the Land of Oz, further destabilizing the ostensible divide between Kansas and Oz and emphasizing what those two spaces have in common. Pink, too, is an oblique reference to the power of Dorothy's youth. The glow Aunt Em lost after years on the farm—the glow

Dorothy still possesses—is colored red, a hue closely related to pink. The second image is no less in conversation with external contexts. The sunflowers at the edges of the page—not mentioned in Baum’s text—regionalize this image, telling viewers without words precisely where they are.²⁰ Also regional are the dual focuses in this art on emotion and labor, two prominent features in much local color fiction and art. Aunt Em’s dishwashing emphasizes this chapter’s realist and naturalist elements, while Henry and Dorothy’s worried expressions bring to mind regionalism’s considerable emphasis on feeling (Fetterley and Pryse). Like the first illustration, the second one also emphasizes youth, playing with contrasts. Dorothy remains in the center of the image while Uncle Henry sits in front of her and Aunt Em washes dishes in the background. Neither adult retains their full height in comparison with Dorothy; she dwarfs the sitting Uncle Henry and her body seems bigger than Aunt Em’s through a trick of perspective. The child figure is the focus here, maintaining a kind of physical largeness at odds with her small body that hints at her importance to the narrative as a whole. With these illustrations, Denslow connects the explicitly regional space of Kansas to the fantasy space of Oz while foregrounding the significance and agency of youth. The two concerns of locality and childhood are, as I will show in subsequent pages, central ones for Baum’s novel.

Just as significant to *Oz*’s visual production of colorful locality are the full-color plates depicting important story and character moments. These images often depict tightly framed scenes, favoring detail over broader landscapes. It might easily be argued that *most* illustrations for children, regardless of their commitment to regionalism, do

²⁰ Since its years as a territory, Kansans have associated their state with the wild sunflowers that grow there. The nickname “The Sunflower State” became official in 1903.

favor detail. However, Denslow chooses again and again to make images that not only focus on detail, but that also implicate larger worlds immediately beyond the borders of the page, stressing a relationship between local and global that acknowledges the two are always in conversation. The local portrayed in these images is often deeply human, invested with emotion; the prominence of feeling also gestures towards a major regionalist ethos. For example, *Oz*'s first full-color plate illustrating a scene from the novel shows Dorothy leaning out of a hole in the Kansas farmhouse's floor, grabbing onto a shocked Toto's ear to prevent him from flying away. This image is zoomed in, concentrating only on Dorothy and Toto while the other elements remain peripheral, yet nevertheless present. The only signs of the cyclone whirling around them are several white, slightly curled lines against a blue backdrop and Dorothy's untangling braid, sailing in the wind, suggesting the greater context of the moment. Rather than emphasize Dorothy's smallness within the larger house around her, or even show the small house at the center of the much larger cyclone—a portrayal that might communicate the power of an event that catalyzes the events of the novel—Denslow narrows in on what seems to be a minor interaction, one not crucial to the scene he's depicting. For Dorothy, however, this ostensibly minor event is a major one; Toto is her best friend and dearest companion, and the panicked expression on her face is one meant to inspire concern and empathy in readers for her potential loss. By neglecting the image that begs showing—the sweeping cyclone—in favor of an intimate, empathic exchange, Denslow participates in aligning Baum's project with a central concern of literary regionalism. “We [use] the word empathy,” Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse write, “to describe one of the most significant features of regionalism, [and suggest that regional narratives] foster an

affective connection between the reader of the work and the lives the work depicts” (107). Despite *Oz*’s reputation as a book that puts a far greater premium on plot than characterization—a reputation that admittedly has more than a little merit to it—both Baum and Denslow do, in fact, make an concerted effort to emphasize affective moments between their characters. This commitment is certainly a crucial part of making child readers and viewers care about Dorothy and her friends, but it also gestures towards regionalism’s interest in the construction of empathy between reader and character. *Oz*’s dismantling of set binaries is at work here, too. Despite the novel’s vested interest in plot, a focus that Fetterley and Pryse brand as hegemonic and aligned with mainstream, nationalist American literary culture, Baum and Denslow also favor the production of structures of feeling that are closely associated with works of regional fiction.

While Denslow’s illustrations make strong gestures towards the interests of local color, it admittedly takes more effort to read Baum’s text—specifically the parts of the book set in Oz—as literary regionalism. *Oz* is first and foremost a fantasy novel, and it embraces many of the emerging genre’s tropes, including a focus on relatively formulaic plot over character development, the presence of magic and the supernatural, and a setting in a world that, while familiar in some ways, is decidedly not our own. Returning again to Hamlin Garland, whose advocacy for regional literature was arguably the loudest among U.S. regionalists at the turn of the century, we find arguments for local color fiction that appear not to intersect with *Oz*’s interest in the fantastic. Local color, for Garland, is a “spontaneous [reflection of] the life which goes on around [the writer]. It is natural and unstrained art . . . Local color in a novel means that it has such quality of texture and back-ground that it could not have been written in any other place or by any

one else than a native” (64). This description is at odds with Baum’s novel, and seems, at first, to impede an interpretation of *Oz* as specifically Garlandian local color. Yet Garland’s definition is notably flawed and partial, making assumptions about the ability of writers to recreate an objective truth; it neglects hidden or subtle influences that shape the production of local color fiction written by others and by himself. He seems to believe that it is possible for writers to reproduce the region in a way that pushes signifier against signified with little-to-no distance, that “natural and unrestrained art” is achievable, and that the writer is capable of creating literature that lacks interference by other elements external to the region. All writing is by definition an attempt to recreate a foundational or source experience—whether placed, emotional, acted, or all three—and is therefore a highly crafted practice, despite Garland’s firm belief otherwise. Local color writing may demand or invite deep familiarity with the region depicted, as Garland argues, but to believe that representational art is somehow spontaneous or natural is to deny the space, time, and numerous filters between the creator and the created. In short, Garland’s definitions of local color in *Crumbling Idols* and Garland’s actual production of local color in his fiction do not entirely overlap.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is fantasy, but regionalism itself—particularly Garland’s understanding of local color—is also arguably an engagement with the imaginary. Garland, like the vast majority of regionalists, wrote his local color fiction at a removal from the space described, relying on that famous trickster memory for verisimilitude. Regionalism’s strictest critics, Amy Kaplan and Richard Brodhead among them, have argued that the subgenre contributes to the construction of a national imaginary by forging a common origin in fictionalized rural spaces. Even those more

inclined towards regionalism's critical possibilities must allow that regional writing, by definition, is an attempt at conjuring; it brings to life a detailed place separate from the reader and the author. Local color fiction, despite Garland's protests to the contrary, is an imaginative generation of a peculiar space distant to the time and place of its reproduction in writing. In creating the Land of Oz, Baum acknowledges as fantasy what Garland and other regionalists insist on identifying as reality. Garland's South Dakota, in some ways, differs only from Oz in that Dakota is the name of a space readers can still visit. The Dakota Garland describes, however, is forever placed in an imaginary past, separated from Garland and from Garland's readers as irrevocably as the Land of Oz itself.

Critics have remarked on the considerable similarities between Garland's bleak South Dakotan landscapes and Baum's naturalist Kansas, but none have acknowledged the stylistic and descriptive overlaps between Garland's inviting South Dakotan landscapes and Baum's lush Oz.²¹ The two are surprisingly alike, both suggesting an Edenic space. Garland paints a memorably colorful picture:

Above the level belt of timber to the east a vast dome of pale undazzling gold was rising, silently and swiftly. Jays called in the thickets where the maples flamed amid the green oaks, with irregular splashes of red and orange. The grass was crisp with frost under the feet, the road smooth and gray-white in color, the air was indescribably sweet, resonant, and stimulating.

This description opens the first story in Garland's best known collection, *Main-Travelled Roads* (1895), and is typically chromatic, referencing at least five distinct colors while

²¹ As John Funchion points out in his article "Putting the Past Out to Pasture: Nostalgia, Regional Aesthetics and the Mutualist Imagination of the 1890s," Garland's regionalism is far less forlorn than generally assumed. While Garland often emphasizes the unforgiving elements of the Great Plains in his work, he also embraces welcoming aesthetics, sometimes representing the prairie in lush and inviting ways.

detailing a regional, rural landscape. Baum's first account of Oz, immediately after Dorothy's arrival, is slightly less loaded with adjectives but similarly opulent:

The cyclone had set the house down, very gently—for a cyclone—in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty. There were lovely patches of green sward all about, with stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Banks of gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered in the trees and bushes. A little way off was a small brook, rushing and sparkling along between green banks, and murmuring in a voice very grateful to a little girl who had lived so long on the dry, gray prairies. (20)

In both passages, readers encounter the pastoral at its most ideal, implicitly contrasted with the unforgiving land encountered elsewhere in the same text. Like Garland, Baum produces a regionalized scene through emphasis on natural elements; his writing is “rooted in the soil . . . among the corn-fields . . . in the peat-bogs” (*Crumbling Idols* 59). But although the descriptions are similar in content and focus, what truly marks Baum's text as aligned with Garland's is their mutual interest in animation and anthropomorphism. Garland's jaybirds “call,” his maple trees “flame”; Baum's birds sing, and his brook “murmur[s] in a voice very grateful.” With the exception of the brook, these verbs are unobtrusive enough to escape notice. The kind of animation and personification they perform is familiar, but it is no less significant to their production of local color for its inconspicuousness. Garland and Baum's animating verbs do the work of Victor Frankenstein: they bring nouns to life in a way that mirrors the resurrection of an idealized, presumed lost, and always fantasized past. There's no place like home, but, of course, there never *was* any place like home. The responsibility of the regionalist writer is to resuscitate, to breath color back into the cheeks of dead land. Similarly, the responsibility of the fantasy writer is to make the impossible seem possible, a task that

has much in common with the duties of the regionalist. When Baum refers to a brook murmuring in a grateful voice, he straddles a gray zone between the descriptive lushness of Garland's vivid pastoral scenes and a fantasy world where brooks may, in fact, possess actual, non-metaphoric voices. In giving inhuman objects and beings a human agency through the power of language, Garland himself—whether knowingly or unknowingly—disturbs the perceived division between realism and fantasy, a division Baum's *Oz* explicitly subverts.

Despite the strangeness of the new country in which Dorothy finds herself, certain aspects of it retain clear parallels to the world she's recently left and the world Baum's readers know. Much has been made in *Oz* criticism of Henry Littlefield's famous 1964 reading of the book as a populist parable, which draws numerous analogies between the characters and representative colors—particularly the witch's silver slippers—to argue that *Oz* takes a stance on 1890s U.S. monetary policy. While the continued value of this reading to academic conversation is suspect, the greatest detriment to its sustained popularity is that it distracts from other, perhaps more convincing analogies we can draw from *Oz*. Littlefield's interpretation and other popular analyses tend to rely on economic or political equivalents to the United States in the last years of the nineteenth century; almost none, however, examine the considerable geographic parallels between *Oz* and “real world” maps. Regionality is unequivocally essential to the Land of *Oz*, in a way that gestures towards the centrality of region to American life and American literary culture at the turn of the century.²² Within two pages of Dorothy's arrival in the Land of the

²² The first information Dorothy receives regarding her location is that she has arrived in the Land of the Munchkins, not the Land of *Oz*, and when prompted to name her own place of origin, Dorothy names Kansas, not the United States. Region corresponds to region.

Munchkins, we learn that four witches dwell in the four corners of Oz: the witches of the East, West, North, and South. While the North and the South receive mention and are somewhat important to the narrative—the witch of the North greets Dorothy in the Land of the Munchkins, while Glinda, the witch of the South, helps Dorothy find her way home again—it is East and West which prove most significant, providing the catalyst and locus for the novel’s major tensions. Dorothy’s farmhouse famously lands on the wicked Witch of the East, killing her instantly, an act Dorothy does not intend but receives credit for from the happy residents of the Land of the Munchkins: “She has held all the Munchkins in bondage for many years, making them slave for her night and day. Now they are all set free, and are grateful to you for the favor” (22-23). In beginning his novel with the death of a repressive representative of a place labeled East at the hands of a seemingly powerless—yet surprisingly resourceful—representative of the (mid)West, Baum manufactures a rich parallel to contemporary literary debates over regional supremacy. The tyranny of the East has been destroyed, not through Dorothy’s malice, but through the sheer undeniable fact of size: the witch of the East is simply no match for the weight of the farmhouse. As Garland notes in his 1893 manifesto “Literary Emancipation of the West”: “‘Bigness does not count,’ the East says in answer to the West. Yes, but it does!” (159). Taken in concert with Baum’s opening call for a modernized children’s literature, this analogy carries the weight of his own paratext with it. It is, as Garland argues local color fiction should be, a reflection of the life going on around the writer (*Crumbling Idols* 62). Baum’s novel, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is mirroring a move away from Eastern literature that advocates for the demise of the old order and the rise of the new one. The death of the East as an opening

action for a novel that proclaims itself a new kind of fiction serves as blatant and unrepentant metaphor.²³

Generations of readers and scholars have believed that Kansas and the Land of Oz are entirely separate, the latter a welcoming, lush, fertile antidote to the former's bleak misery. Baum's text does not entirely bear out this assumption. Certainly in places—most notably the land of the Munchkins—the environment that surrounds Dorothy is flourishing. Nevertheless, it has some important overlaps with the region she's left behind, sometimes through similarity and often through contrast so stark as to recall the space left behind. Baum's narrator describes Dorothy's observations as she walks through the Munchkin's country: "There were neat fences at the side of the road, painted a dainty blue color, and beyond them were fields of grain and vegetables in abundance. Evidently the Munchkins were good farmers and able to raise large crops" (33). The allusion to Kansas is unavoidable. Even at the turn of the twentieth century, Dorothy's home state was most famous for the production of wheat, and so the reference to "fields of grain" recalls something recognizably Kansan, if not textually present (Uncle Henry and Aunt Em's withered farm has no such fields). Even the contrasts in the description recall Kansas through stark opposition. Fences and roads neatly bisect the farmland of the Munchkins, whereas Kansas farmland in *Oz* has nothing but unbroken "great grey prairie" on all sides. Like Kansas, the land of the Munchkins is primarily agrarian, and their ability to produce an abundance of crops evokes Uncle Henry's lack of success with

²³ In arguing that *Oz*'s geography has real world equivalents, I am deliberately avoiding making the statement that *Oz* is an analogue for the United States, which seems to me a reductive claim. *Oz* shares enough dissimilarities with the U.S. to be a separate entity—as Jack Zipes points out in his introduction to a later reissue of *Oz*, the latter cultivates socialist utopian principles that U.S. citizens largely eschewed—but to simply say that *Oz* is not the U.S. does a disservice to the very real geographic and cultural contexts in which Baum wrote his novel.

his resistant land. In short, the Land of the Munchkins is seemingly a utopian Kansas, the (mid)West at its best and most fertile: the happy side of the Janus-faced Great Plains landscape Hamlin Garland depicts as sometimes Edenic and sometimes nightmare. One cannot exist absent the other. We cannot properly understand the bleakness of Kansas without the lushness of the Land of the Munchkins, and we cannot appreciate the latter's abundance without first experiencing the deprivation Kansas represents. In this way, Baum teases a textual dedication to a cosmopolitan ethos even before Dorothy and her friends arrive at the Emerald City. While these geographic contrasts cannot lead us on their own to a definition of *Oz* as cosmopolitan—two opposing rural landscapes do not on their own a cosmopolitan novel make—they announce an early commitment to contradictory presences that jostle against one another, a central conceit of the term. They hint at a call to consider rural spaces alongside urban ones in consideration of what makes a heterogeneous, cosmopolitan multiplicity.

If readers first believe the country of *Oz* to be a kind of rural paradise based on these early descriptions, they quickly discover not all is not delightful. As Dorothy and the Scarecrow pass out of the Land of the Munchkins on the Yellow Brick Road towards the Emerald City, the road and land begins to grow rougher: “Sometimes, indeed, [the yellow bricks] were broken or missing altogether, leaving holes that Toto jumped across and Dorothy walked around . . . The farms were not nearly so well cared for here as they were farther back. There were fewer houses and fewer fruit trees, and the farther they went the more dismal and lonesome the country became” (43-44). *Oz*, as Dorothy experiences it, starts to lose some of the features that separates it from Kansas. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em's farm is primarily defined by its bleakness and its isolation, two

descriptions that reenter the narrative here as “dismal” and “lonesome.” Even the Oz landscape has fewer distinctive features, hemorrhaging houses and trees as Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and Toto traverse it (“Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions”). This shift serves two primary purposes: to confirm that Oz is a regionalized country, made up of poppy fields and dark forests and wide plains that have dissimilar characteristics; and to remind readers that, although Oz is a separate place from Kansas, with many distinct concerns, the dividing line between the two is nowhere near as stark as it might seem. The conversation between Dorothy and the Scarecrow immediately following this description, while seemingly arguing for disparity between Kansas and Oz, is at odds with the bleak, lonesome context in which they speak. “I cannot understand,” the Scarecrow says to Dorothy, “why you should want to leave this beautiful country and go back to the dry, gray place you call Kansas” (44). The “beautiful country,” however, is behind them. Oz is a shifting space, and as Dorothy moves through it the land changes, often drastically, sometimes gaining in similarities to the place the Scarecrow believes Dorothy has fully left behind.²⁴ Like the United States, Oz is made up of beautiful countries and dry, gray places alike. Its regional distinctions and disparities help to produce its appealing heterogeneity.

²⁴ Dorothy, like many central characters in works of local color, is a traveler. In *Together by Accident: American Local Color Literature and the Middle Class*, Stephanie Palmer argues that regional literature is defined in large part by “travel accidents,” or upsetting incidents that occur when characters experience “distressing or surprising event[s]” while in transit (11). Certainly, the majority of Dorothy’s encounters, even with characters later proven to be trustworthy and safe, fit this description. Palmer suggests that these accidents underscore the rapid increases in transportation technology that define the later years of the twentieth century, ultimately serving as a commentary on “the startling and unexpected effects” of modernity (19).

The Emerald City certainly bears no real resemblance to Kansas, and through its presence in the novel seemingly forces a departure from the familiar rural settings of local color literature. Yet its importance to *Oz* provides significance regional context. Many scholars, including Stephanie Foote, Judith Fetterley, and Marjorie Pryse have taken for granted the long-held assumption that regional fiction is rural by definition, often going so far as to speak about “urban” fiction in contrast to “regional” fiction. While it is true that the majority of regional texts are set in rural locales, the urban regional work does exist.²⁵ The presence of the Emerald City does not make *Oz* less regional through urbanity, but rather serves to remind us of the cosmopolitan work regionalism can do, while implicitly alluding to a significant real-world event that brought the world’s eyes to the Midwest. Like *Oz* itself, the Emerald City brings together cosmopolitan clashes, regional formations, and speculative futures, refusing easy synthesis. The Emerald City in *Oz* is a reflection of the White City, the metropolis of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which so fascinated Baum: “[T]he White City seemed to spring up suddenly out of nowhere in the center of the country. . . . The shops and vendors were as lively as those in the capital of Oz” (Hearn 176). Like the White City, the Emerald City is intended to be a utopic space, where “everyone seem[s] happy and contented and prosperous” (122). That defining trait, paired with the Wizard’s access to advanced technology which allows him to trick Dorothy and the others, recalls the speculative worlds Baum explored in his regional “Our Landlady” columns, suggesting a fantastic yet achievable future.²⁶ Then, as in *Oz*, science-fiction meets the

²⁵ I explore three examples of local fiction set in urban areas in Chapter Four.

²⁶ There are clear resemblances between the air balloon that transports the Wizard to the Land of Oz and the “airships” of the future with which Baum was so fascinated.

regional, bridging genres in a way that acknowledges the familiar and the strange, the old and the new.

It is not the Emerald City itself that provides *Oz* with its cosmopolitanism, however—that argument would only reinforce the old assumption that cities alone generate multiplicities—but the way the Emerald City functions as one particular regionalized space in conversation with the Land of Oz and with Kansas. Like the rural Land of the Munchkins, described with language that recalls Hamlin Garland’s more favorable depictions of South Dakota, the Emerald City is one (local) color. Like Kansas, the midpoint of the United States, the Emerald City is “exactly in the center of the country” (27), a shared geography that looks past the urban-rural divide. Regionality, however, has also to do with the production of space as regional or local, and the City resists the inaccessibility implied by its size by tailoring space specifically to the child’s interests. This, I argue, indicates a kind of regionality that depends not on the physical sectioning of space into distinct regions, but upon the intangible production of access. Economic exchanges in the Emerald City generate a decidedly juvenile space. As Hearn points out, the items for sale are items a child would notice and desire, including green candy, green lemonade, green shoes, green hats, and green “pop corn,” all paid for by children with green pennies. Again, like the Land of the Munchkins, the Emerald City constitutes a space Dorothy can access, participate in, and possibly even influence, despite its size and heterogeneity. Its population may be much larger than the Land of the Munchkins, and the architecture far more dazzling, but what its presence in the text primarily signals is that Baum values the production of a cosmopolitan multiplicity that maintains a regional ethos.

The reader's ability to experience that ethos would not be possible without Dorothy, her actions, and the way she participates in the creation of Oz's local space. Like the vast majority of central child characters in twentieth-century regional children's literature, Dorothy placates adult cultural anxieties through her presence and accomplishments. These anxieties are twofold but similar: one concerns the progressive loss of geographic and cultural locality in the face of rapid technological advancement, while the other revolves around the perceived "disappearance" of the child, who by the simple act of surviving and growing older leaves behind an idealized state of supposed innocence. Baum's novel placates these anxieties by foregrounding threats to locality and childishness, and subsequently revealing those threats to be surmountable, often through magical or literary means not accessible outside the text. The first of these cultural anxieties—the ones concerning the disappearance of the local or immediately familiar—stems in large part from the advancement of modern technologies. In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, these advancements appear but are ultimately unthreatening. Baum's embrace of technology, diverse populations, and quick travel gesture towards an interest in modernity that lives alongside its production of fantasy and regionalism; as I have argued, this is not a novel that can easily be relegated to a single category or genre. The Wizard's "magic" is in reality not magic at all, but a kind of technologically-aided subterfuge or trickery. Dorothy encounters different kinds of peoples with different skin colors and ways of life as she navigates Oz, her introduction to the happy shocks of heterogeneity. Even Dorothy's original arrival in the Land of the Munchkins via cyclone evokes the loud, rapid storm of the locomotive train, in 1900 transporting travelers into every nook and cranny of the United States with relative ease. The advent of modernity

and technological advancement is, for Baum, something desirable; one only has to return to the final line of the “Our Landlady” columns to see his eagerness for the arrival of the future: “[T]hese things’ll all be found out as the country progresses.” Yet Baum combines the presentation of these exciting technologies with a kind of reassurance that tempers an anticipated cultural anxiety, a reactionary anathema to change. His love for the advent of new technologies and meetings is possible because these encounters are effectively localized. In Baum’s world, the familiar local can co-exist quite happily with the jostles of cosmopolitan modernity.²⁷ The local is also an ideal, accessible space in which to capture the slippery child subject, who is always in the process of losing what makes her a child. Dorothy is a comforting paradox. She is a child who changes her larger surroundings through intensely regionalized and localized actions—a suggestion that despite the increasing cultural and economic shifts towards nationalism, the local still matters—and she is also a child who herself does not change at all. Dorothy never ages in any of the fourteen *Oz* novels written by Baum. The childishness she performs is an arrested one, and though puberty seems to loom around the corner for her it never arrives. In her unchanging state childhood loses its defining feature; it is no longer emblematic of something lost or disappearing. Dorothy appeals to child readers for her pluck and resourcefulness, but she speaks to adults as well, for different reasons. This child character is a kind of balm on the perceived wound of loss that defined cultural conversations around localized geographies and childishness in the early years of the twentieth century.

²⁷ Recall the talking directory “phone” only equipped to inform its users of goings-on in Aberdeen in “Our Landlady.” *Oz* is not the first of Baum’s writing to localize speculative technology.

Dorothy is a participant in the discursive and spatial construction of her local environments, affecting change actively and passively through events not always in her control. While Oz is a regionalized space independent of Dorothy's actions, produced in part through its relationship to U.S. cultural, literary, and geographic constructs, Dorothy effectively and consistently transforms her surroundings in ways that are also regionalizing, often through the establishment of emotional connections that engender political and cultural shifts within the world of the text. The emotional component of these actions are key, because they indicate the extent to which Baum's novel participates in a familiar regionalist tradition. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse have argued that regionalist literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is significant because it foregrounds and celebrates the production of empathy between text and reader. Empathy requires that the individual develops compassion for a vantage point or experience that may not be her own, but that she can *feel* as if it were her own: "[It] requires an other-centered connection while maintaining an awareness of separateness from the other" (346). Regionalism models an empathic stance by inviting characters and readers to listen from the inside rather than the outside, producing a sense of closeness, interconnection, and relation without collapsing self onto other in a problematic erasure of difference. "Regionalist fictions," they claim, "invite us to engage in the empathic act of shifting the center of perception from the one who gazes to the one gazed at . . . we see how things look from the vantage point of the 'peculiar'" (382).²⁸ Dorothy, as her questions and actions prove, is thoroughly empathic. Her constant willingness to treat

²⁸Although Fetterley and Pryse do not use the word, empathy as they define it is also a kind of cosmopolitanism, and therefore its inclusion in *Oz* is part of the book's participation in the valuing of heterogeneity.

others with kindness, listen to their stories, and help them in their quests for what they lack helps produce an accessible and hospitable compassion. Strangers in Oz quickly become friends. When Dorothy meets the Scarecrow, she immediately helps him dismount from his pole at his request. In response to his lament that he lacks brains, she offers that she is “awfully sorry,” and invites him immediately to come with her to the Emerald City to ask the Wizard for brains. Denslow seems to understand the significance of Dorothy’s ability to connect with the Scarecrow, depicting in one full-color illustration a moment that, in Baum’s text, passes quickly by without comment. “Tell me a story,” Dorothy requests, and the Scarecrow consents, telling her the only story he knows: his own. In Denslow’s illustration, Dorothy, Toto, and the Scarecrow sit in the foreground by a brook while Dorothy eats bread out of her basket. She looks at the speaking Scarecrow, whom the caption tells us is explaining that he was “only made yesterday.” Her expression is a mournful one, indicating sadness for a being that lacks history or agency, and signaling to readers that they, too, should imagine how terrible it might be to know nothing. The act of empathic storytelling within the image and text draws attention to the act of empathic storytelling done *by* the image and text. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is a novel that produces a tight sense of closeness through foregrounding moments of empathic exchange as crucial to the narrative.



Figure 4: “I was only made yesterday,’ said the Scarecrow,” *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Empathy in *Oz* is a mechanism for establishing community, and Dorothy forms her tight-knit group of friends primarily by listening to the unfamiliar experiences of others. This process recalls acts of listening valued by many works of nineteenth-century regional literature.²⁹ The Tin Man reveals himself to Dorothy not through sight, but through groaning, to which she, concerned, responds. “I’ve been groaning for more than a year,” he informs her, “and no one has ever heard me before or come to help me.” Dorothy is affected, not only by the words but by the tone: ““What can I do for you?” she enquired, softly, for she was moved by the sad voice in which the man spoke” (55). It is Dorothy’s model that inspires the close connection between herself and the others; later, when the Tin Man begins to cry after stepping on a beetle and killing it, his jaw rusts shut, and the Scarecrow, mimicking Dorothy’s earlier actions, helpfully oils his joints to

²⁹ The work of New England women regional writers in particular focuses on the production of empathy through listening and intimate exchange. While Baum generally favors the production of a Great Plains regionalism in his work, one that oscillates between the region’s ability to reject and the region’s ability to appeal, he also incorporates an ethos central to the regionalism of writers such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. Baum, famously a feminist and advocate for women’s suffrage, arguably wrote fiction from the margins that was deeply invested in the agency of women and girls. Like “Our Landlady,” which eschews plot and heteronormativity, embracing the sketch format and the humorous social observations of a post-menopausal woman as its central character, *Oz* reflects a commitment to a decidedly anti-masculinist method of communication.

allow him to speak again, understanding without words what the Tin Man needs.

Dorothy's compassion and her finely tuned empathy effectively produces localized space by establishing an ethos of community that mimics a close and intimate environment. Oz itself may be large, shifting and unwieldy, but it becomes physically and emotionally accessible through Dorothy's production of closeness.

Dorothy effects major changes to Oz, constructing locality through the practice of empathy and transforming her locations through both intentional and unintentional acts. When she reveals the Wizard to be a "humbug" who does not actually possess magical powers, she also forces him to admit that the Emerald City's green color is entirely produced by the green glasses worn by its population and visitors. In this way, Dorothy quite literally alters the "local color" of a given space. Perhaps the two most memorable changes she authors, however, are involuntary ones, and I turn to these now to in order to examine how Dorothy represents a kind of idealized, unassailable childishness, one that remains problematically fixed despite the revolutions she inspires in others. First upon her arrival in Oz, and then again midway through the text, Dorothy kills two people.³⁰ These deaths are unintentional: the demise of the wicked witch of the East occurs because Dorothy's house crushes her body, and the wicked witch of the West dies when Dorothy, angry at the Witch's refusal to give back Dorothy's shoe, throws a nearby bucket of water on the Witch, immediately dissolving her. (One wonders why the Witch, aware that water

³⁰ In 1998, Rick Polito famously summarized the 1939 *Wizard of Oz* film for a listing in the *Marin Independent Journal*: "Transported to a surreal landscape, a young girl kills the first person she meets and then teams up with three strangers to kill again." In the years since, the quote has gone viral; a Google search for Polito turns up numerous blog entries and articles delighted by the synopsis. The quote juxtaposes the familiar cultural image of Dorothy-as-plucky-savior with the darker, unexplored image of Dorothy-as-killer. These are two truths that shove unreconciled against one another, yet another in a series of heterogeneous clashes in Baum's work. The delight of this quote is in its accuracy. Despite the fact that the actual deaths themselves are not intentional, nothing in Polito's synopsis is false.

works on her like strong hydrochloric acid, would allow a large container of it anywhere near her presence.) It is imperative that both of these acts of homicide are manslaughter rather than premeditated murder. Baum's child character must remain a child in ways that harmonize with contemporary U.S. cultural precepts of childishness. If she murders then she is no longer a child, and she heightens rather than ameliorates adult anxieties around the disappearance of childhood. Both deaths are necessary ones. In ensuring the death of the witch of the East, Dorothy arrives in Oz a hero, securing the love and admiration of others and indicating that the smallest individual can still alter local space in significant ways. The witch of the West must die so that Dorothy can go home again, but the Witch cannot die in any way that belies the child's childishness. Dorothy's cry just prior to the Witch's death, "You have no right to take my shoe from me," is the cry of a young person who believes firmly that rightness and fairness are the guidelines that rule sentient beings' actions. Dorothy's manslaughter is arguably prompted not by a desire to murder the Witch, but out of her frustration at learning a difficult lesson in human interaction. In destroying the Witch, Dorothy not only manages to preserve what makes her a child but also participates in an act that marks one of the defining elements of childhood: learning sociality through exchange. This preservation is crucial. Without it the reassurance Dorothy's childishness provides would be threatened.

Just as Dorothy's ability to produce and influence regionalized space is an act that assuages U.S. cultural fears regarding the loss of the local, Dorothy's very childishness is a performance that assuages cultural mourning for the always-occurring loss of the child. Carolyn Steedman, in tracing how the idea of the child developed in the West between the eighteenth century and the twentieth, notes that by 1900 the child was increasingly

“representative of a lost realm, lost in the individual past, and in the past of the culture” (10). Robin Bernstein builds on Steedman’s observations, claiming that childhood is “best understood as an act of surrogation that compensates for losses incurred through growth” (24). In enacting a childishness that resists change or loss, Dorothy is herself an act of surrogation, less a child than a performance of a child that actively resists association with loss or disappearance. This child forever on the cusp of puberty but never advancing forward is in many ways a fixed construction, her emotional journey through *Oz* not an arc but a loop. She changes others but remains largely unchanged at the end of the book, her final action a happy run back into the arms of the delighted Aunt Em. Dorothy’s famous statement, “There’s no place like home,” has reverberated throughout American culture for more than a century, in large part thanks to the 1939 MGM film. The persistence of the line in cultural memory has less to do with an imagined child’s longing and more to do with the adult fantasy that spawned it. The child *can* go home again, that mantra promises. The child can turn back after heading out into the world. The child can be recovered. What’s lost can be found and cherished.

The first word of *Oz* is “Dorothy”; the last two words are “home again.” In many ways, these bookends sum up the entirety of the text’s emotional momentum. Fantasy in Baum’s novel is not only the magic of witches and wizards and talking creatures, but the magic of the arrested or the regressive child. The child who is able to come back is an imaginary creation that denies the reality of the child for whom time gives no choice but to continue on.³¹ In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Baum addresses the cultural anxieties

³¹ Perry Nodelman has argued that much of children’s literature follows a pattern of home-away-home, where the child departs home, has adventures, and returns to a home that is (and in some small ways isn’t)

around loss and disappearance that shaped much of U.S. discourse throughout the twentieth century through the creation of a child character who effects localized change, ensuring the continued relevance of the local, while remaining unimpeachably and irrevocably childish, ensuring that she will never grow older. In this way, he reaches an audience that includes but exceeds child readers, and irrevocably intertwines the threatened constructs of childhood and locality—both essential to the production of U.S. national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—showing in his work that the two are not only related, but mutually formative.

This reciprocal interplay between locality and childhood is a significant component of the unresolved and complex elements that form *Oz*, a novel that despite its continued reputation as “simple” children’s fantasy refuses reduction into easy or disparate categories. Like the act of nature that transports Dorothy to a land far away, *Oz* itself is a cyclone. It whirls and spins and mixes, bringing one space into another space, constituting a gray, shifting thing that refuses to stay still. A work of regional fantasy that engages with modernity, naturalism, and cosmopolitanism, it functions in simultaneously conservative and avant-garde ways that contradict but do not cancel out one another. In producing a kind of childishness and locality that preserves American fictions about the accessibility and survival of both, *Oz* fulfills fantasies that are decidedly about the preservation of (imagined) pasts. However, *Oz* also dismantles ostensible boundaries between literary genres and styles, reverberating with unsettled choices, questions, and conflicts. By bringing together disparate styles and desires without the goal of happy

the same. *Oz* is a textbook example, but this pattern’s omnipresence suggests that return-as-resolution is a dominating feature of the genre.

resolution, Baum does for children's fiction what his contemporary Hamlin Garland intends to do for Western fiction. He emancipates it from the shackles of American literature's hierarchies by linking his novel to the concerns of multiple literary traditions, none of which have an established relationship with children's fiction. And yet, despite this forward-looking effort, which defies old assumptions that regionalism, realism, modernity, naturalism, and cosmopolitanism have inherently antithetical interests, the fantasy that *Oz* produces is fundamentally retrospective. It assuages a cultural longing for places, spaces, and individual selves that, in the early twentieth century, seemed increasingly at odds with the nation's expansion. John Funchion observes that Dorothy's cosmopolitan interactions primarily serve as a means for her to return to Kansas; that this desire reflects the way imperialist policies flourishing in the U.S. around the turn of the century jostled against a growing need for the production of reassuring, localized home spaces (Funchion 431). Dorothy comes back to Aunt Em so that we, too, can return: to Kansas, to our child selves, to the little lost local. I identify these contradictory elements not in an attempt to resolve them through synthesis, or to claim that some hold weight over others, but to make a case for why *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is a serious work of literature that deserves consideration not solely as an object of cultural interest. Like Hamlin Garland, who advocates for broader representation of the "mingling seas of men" rather than the voices of a few, Baum's literary efforts are literary precisely because they incorporate unresolved, heterogeneous desires and viewpoints. His novel is no less regional for its fantasy, no less fantastic for its realism, no less realist for its modernity, and no less modern for its conservatism. In the invented name of Baum's land, the

familiar, round, and comforting O nestles up against the strange, sharp, and buzzing Z.

Both are essential.

Chapter 2:

“Of an order entirely new”: Translocality, Dialect, and *The Secret Garden*

“‘It is not common argot,’ she said. ‘It has its subtleties. One continually finds somewhere an original idea—sometimes even a *bon mot*, which startles one by its pointedness. As you say, however, it belongs only to the Americans and their remarkable country.’”

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Esmeralda*

Unlike *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a work of regional fantasy that challenges traditional genre definitions, Frances Hodgson Burnett’s 1911 novel appears on first read to be textbook British provincialism, the story of three children who cultivate an eminently English garden in the middle of a Yorkshire estate. However, *Garden* straddles two nations, as both text and author are British and American (Sanders 99). Despite its seeming conservatism, this novel, like *Oz*, also disturbs easy assumptions; where *Oz* challenges genre conventions, integrating the imaginary and the real in its production of regional fantasy, *Garden* challenges geographic and political ones. *The Secret Garden* is a book with a region and no country. Its setting is Yorkshire, perhaps the most well-defined region within the borders of England, but *Garden*’s production of place and space has a great deal in common with the production of place and space in U.S. local color writing, a relationship that stems from Burnett’s own history writing local color fiction set in Tennessee and North Carolina. The novel heavily emphasizes the topography, cultural customs, and linguistic peculiarities of Yorkshire, creating a defined local space outside the boundaries of the United States. Nevertheless, this space is in conversation with traditions, texts, and concerns that overlap significantly with U.S. regional interests. *Garden* incorporates elements of realism and romanticism, understood by regionalist

scholars to be defining components of local color fiction. It foregrounds platonic relationships and pastoral environments, beginning with the entrance of a stranger into a tight-knit local community. It defines local space through the use of local dialect, mirroring the fascination with linguistic variety that defined much late nineteenth-century U.S. literature. *Garden* also embraces ideologies of queerness and empathy—two constructs intrinsic to U.S. literary regionalism—resisting meanings that unequivocally center the nation-state and, in the process, hinting at a mobile discourse co-produced across international borders.

In reading this work for its slippery productions of locality, I am departing from a tradition of criticism that largely examines *Garden* outside the category of place. Analyses of *Garden* tend to focus on the ways Burnett's novel interrogates or reproduces ideologies of gender, class, disability, empire, and domesticity. My own readings of the novel not only acknowledge the intrinsic significance of place to these texts, but the complex, provocative way Burnett constructs locality as heterogeneous potpourri rather than homogenous insularity. Rather than build on the insights of previous scholarship, as I did in my approach to *Oz*, I instead advocate for another approach altogether in this chapter: to read setting in *Garden* through a productively kaleidoscopic lens that simultaneously focuses on the immediacy of the defined local and the larger context of the transnational. In the pages that follow, I argue that the regional space Burnett creates in her children's novel is not only local but *translocal*, creating and invoking multiple localities within different nations. Denying nationality as the mediator between the local and the transnational, translocality displaces the nation-state by acknowledging that locality can function across and in spite of political borders. Translocality allows us to

see how, for example, “certain villages in Bangladesh are more intimately connected with suburbs of Bradford in northern England than with other population centers in Bangladesh itself” (Lyons and Mandaville 5). While the translocal is a concept invented and used primarily by social scientists, it has real relevance for the humanities. Despite a persistent focus in American cultural studies and American literature on the transnational, I believe the translocal is a more provocative resistance to hegemonies of nationalism. In this chapter, I adopt the term “translocal” over the term “transnational” to attempt a deeper separation between Burnett’s novel and its nationalized identity, asking how our understanding of *Garden* shifts when we think of its setting not as England, but as the imagined translocality of Appalachian Yorkshire. Over the past century, *Garden* has enjoyed transnational reaches in both publication and reception. Identifying its productions of space as translocal enables us to see more clearly how Burnett’s work can be deeply rooted in specific place and the product of migratory networks at the same time.

These migrations are central to *The Secret Garden* and its author, who was born in Manchester but spent much of her adult life in America. Burnett sets *Garden* in the North England county of Yorkshire. Assigning a country of origin to *Garden* is difficult, due to Burnett’s murky national identification, the novel’s serial publication in a U.S. periodical (appropriately titled *The American Magazine*), and its engagement with identifiably British traditions, including the cultivation of gardens and the wide reach of British empire. My intention, however, is to examine *Garden*’s regionality rather than pinpoint its nationality. Yorkshire saturates every nook and cranny of *Garden*, largely through the omnipresence of dialect. In foregrounding the region, Burnett inevitably—

and perhaps consciously—invokes the ghost of that other internationally known Yorkshire novel, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. Susan James and Anna Krugovoy Silver have insightfully examined the similarities and divergences between *Garden* and *Wuthering Heights*, but for the most part they focus on parallels between characters and plot developments, rather than the production of place. Yorkshire in *Garden* is a very different construction than Yorkshire in *Wuthering Heights*. While I refrain from identifying the Yorkshire Brontë creates as a “real” Yorkshire, acknowledging the inevitable gap between any habitable place and any literary fiction depicting it, Brontë’s imaginary Yorkshire is in many ways the product of her personal familiarity with that region. Burnett’s imaginary Yorkshire, on the other hand, is strained through multiple discourses at a remove from personal experience of the region, including Brontë’s novel, her own research on dialect, and, significantly, Burnett’s time spent in the regional United States. Unlike Brontë, who lived her whole life in that county, Burnett had no significant personal knowledge of Yorkshire, other than distant family heritage.¹ The region she *did* know intimately as an adult, however, was an American one: the strip of the Appalachian Mountains that covers East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. Like her U.S. contemporary Mary Noailles Murfree, Burnett wrote and published several regional short stories set in this location during the 1870s, all with a heavy emphasis on dialect, porousness, and place as cultural contact zone that predates her later investment in writing these same tropes for children. Although Burnett’s Yorkshire does bear some striking resemblances to Brontë’s Yorkshire, particularly in its dialect and descriptions of

¹ Burnett’s father, Edwin Hodgson, was born in Yorkshire. He died when she was four years old, however, and so it seems unlikely she received from him any second-hand knowledge of the area.

the moors, I read Burnett's production of region in *Garden* as heavily shaped by her Appalachian regional fiction. Her production of locality is therefore hybrid, an assemblage of cross-border concerns and accessible identifications that transcends nationality.

In recent decades, "transnational" has become one of the most deployed keywords in US-centric humanities, as scholars in American literature and American cultural studies increasingly attempt to read the United States outside its political borders and within a global context. To invoke the term "transnational" in concert with American studies is to signal an investment in geographic renarrativisation. In his 2006 presidential address to the American Studies Association conference, Emory Elliott argued that transnationalism is a "search for resistance" to dominant nationalist hegemonies, necessary to "share [global] perspectives and continue to broaden the range of ideas necessary to . . . rethink current political and economic policies" (8, 2). An attempt to expand the often claustrophobic tent of American studies, transnationalism aims to foreground discourses and foci that rethink the inevitably political relationships between human beings and their environments. Despite Elliott's optimism and the academy's general consensus that transnational approaches are critically important to the survival and relevance of American studies, other scholars remain skeptical that transnational studies can do the work it so tantalizingly promises. Realigning perceptions of environment outside the supremacy of the nation-state is a daunting task. For Aihwa Ong, transnationalism fails to move cultural studies away from nation-centric frames; transnationalism is "an extension and projection of the nation, not a challenge to it, but its functional subset," where the nation is always implicated in the "psychic theater" of

planetary interrelations (Dimock 221). Kirsten Silva Gruesz, quoted in a 2011 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, notes that “transnational comparisons [in the academy] have made a fetish out of who is an outsider or insider; that they have not really changed the ways scholars view nations; that they have tended to emphasize established languages . . . while ignoring linguistic subtleties” (Winkler). David Birch observes that local, culture-specific, counter-hegemonic resistances to globalization “create more cultural alternatives, more space for difference,” and actively resist the interrogations of a transnational cultural studies that may not allow for heterogeneous discourses (152). To these critiques I will add my own: in its wide-lensed emphasis on discursive, economic, and cultural exchanges, transnational studies in the humanities has become increasingly divorced from discussions of embodied place. While transnational discourses have done significant and imperative work in realigning US-centric perspectives in American studies, transnational lenses must acknowledge—as Birch and others do—the extent to which the local plays a role in the establishment of connections and exchanges across national borders.

The importance of locality to my reading of *The Secret Garden* in this chapter prevents me from using “transnational” to describe its productions of cross-space. Instead, I turn to the term “translocal,” a still-nascent concept in comparison with transnationalism, but one that far more accurately describes Burnett’s complex regional oscillations without relying overmuch on the nation-state. Translocality, like transnationalism, acknowledges the importance of reading these texts outside concepts of nationality. Unlike transnationalism, however, which remains relatively divorced from specificities and embodiments, translocality emphasizes “local-local connections across

transnational spaces,” acknowledging the “places where situatedness is experienced.” It asks “at what scale is the local constructed,” not assuming the answer is always self-evident (Brickell and Datta 5-6). Translocality invites us to think of local spaces as a constellation of interrelations that transcend borders, while keeping foregrounded the significance of lived experiences, embodiments, and accessible networks. This framework, writes Ulrich Freitag and Achim Van Oppen, “proposes a more open and less linear view on the manifold ways in which the global world is constituted: through the *trans*-gression of boundaries between spaces of very different scale and type” (6). In short, translocality rejects readings of the local as a “self-contained unit,” instead understanding spatial organization through practices of migration, mobility, and transference.

To date, translocality remains a concept more native to the social sciences and to the field of history than literature, which remains predominantly invested in transnational paradigms. Nevertheless, several major voices in the field of critical regionalism have made a point of eschewing the national-regional paradigm in favor of reading locality and region transnationally, advocating for a translocal approach while largely avoiding the term. Krista Comer’s *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women’s Writing* locates the “struggle for cultural authority” in global rather than national contexts, arguing that growing shifts in the (white) construction of U.S. Western masculinity reflect a similar growing international movement to decenter white working-class men from oppression narratives (23). Notably, Comer bypasses the nation to build provocative connections between the West and what she labels Other Wests, refusing to rely on the United States as arbiter or translator. Comer in fact

identifies critical regionalism as always already invested in translocal concerns. “Critical regionalism,” she observes in a later article, “identifies a critique of familiar US Western and nationalist exceptionalisms and . . . radically reorders geographical common-senses to map spaces anew through third spaces, affective electronic posthumanisms, translocalities” (162). There is no significant regionalism, Comer implies, without the dismantling of nationalisms. In *The Rhizomatic West*, an important recent work that explores representations of the American West through a post-national lens, Neil Campbell advocates understanding regionality through the paradoxical practice of examining from a distance:

If . . . [the culture of the West] is viewed globally, it can be detached from its isolation as purely American, a ‘fixed locality’ of ‘boundedness and coherence,’ requiring us, as [James] Clifford says, to ‘step away from notions of separate, integral cultures’ and see culture as traveling with ‘multiple external connections . . . a shifting paradox, an ongoing translation’ . . . [O]ne might rethink ‘any local, national, or regional domain,’ such as the West, as an interactive process of constitutive contacts and mobilities. (3-4)

As I have argued in my introduction and first chapter, the relevance of locality in the twenty-first century as a critical and practical concept depends on our willingness to view it outside a rigid, hierarchical paradigm of local-national-transnational. While the local does indeed engage with constructions of nationalism, often critiquing or reinforcing it, the national does not play intermediary between locality and transnationality. Viewing the local only as a subset of the national, rather than as a complex, shifting “mutating multiplicity” that values “routes over roots,” refuses an important lens that forces us to recognize behaviors, customs, dialects, and practices do not remain conveniently within political boundaries (Campbell 9). In other words, Nova Scotia and Maine may have far

more in common culturally, economically, and geographically than Nova Scotia and the Western plains of Canada, despite the fact that the latter two regions share a country and the former do not.

Childhood and children's literature are unlikely stages on which to enact these destabilizing crossings, as transnational routes seem to imply movements that would inherently exclude child access without adult assistance. Yet childhood, as I have argued, is itself a kind of regional experience, with all the ambiguities, assumptions, and deceptive complexity that signifier summons. The first spaces children encounter and help to construct are always already local, but these localities are never insular or isolated, and can—as Burnett's novel demonstrates—implicate other, geographically distant localities. If American children's literature in the twentieth century becomes a locus for adult anxieties about the co-morbid disappearance of childhood and the disappearance of the local, then transnational North American children's literature that also foregrounds these concerns allows us to see that locality does not reject transnationality, nor does transnationality prohibit the construction of locality. The local still exists and thrives even when literature and culture disregards political borders. In *The Secret Garden*, a young girl with little power outside her proximate environment is the agent who ensures the survival of her local space. Mary Lennox ensures not only her own emotional transformation but the physical recovery of her disabled cousin Colin through the act of creating a beautiful garden. This production of immediate locality within the unstable regional environment of Yorkshire suggests first and foremost that the local remains possible, even desirable, and interaction with it has the power to change the child for good rather than for ill. By producing regional space without regard to national

borders, *Garden* suggests that transnationality and regionality are mutually constructive terms. This novel reimagines region in a way that centralizes the locally situated child as actor rather than the nation as actor. In so doing, it simultaneously destabilizes our hierarchical, rigid conceptions of how region forms within children's literature, and ensures that the child—an essential figure to this process of production—is decidedly present, never lost.

Set in Yorkshire, the story of two unhappy English children who gain emotional and physical health through the acquisition of Yorkshire dialect and social practice, *Garden* relies primarily on constructs of locality rather than nationality. A hybrid novel, its cultivation of a British local space for children is filtered heavily through Frances Hodgson Burnett's understanding of regional difference, firmly shaped by her formative adolescent and early adult years in East Tennessee. Today many readers identify the county of Yorkshire with *The Secret Garden*, placing that novel with *Wuthering Heights* and James Herriot's novels in a small pantheon of Yorkshire literature. I argue, however, that Burnett's Yorkshire in no way aims at reproducing a literary facsimile of a lived, embodied Yorkshire, as Brontë and Herriot's Yorkshires do. Instead, Yorkshire in *The Secret Garden* is a fictional composite of other fictions, an imagined region that owes much of its self-identified queerness, instability, and even its use of dialect to Burnett's early U.S. local color writing. This regional fiction, written and published primarily in the 1870s, provides the theoretical and cultural scaffolding for Burnett's provocative production of region in *The Secret Garden* nearly forty years later. In performing locality as a series of translations and exchanges that refuses roots or homogeneity, Burnett

manufactures a radical and dynamic translocal space that simultaneously offers close detail and broader perspective.

This translocality is inseparable from *Garden's* authorship. Burnett, famously Anglo-American, refused to identify as either English or American, saying only that she understood the general public's confusion over her nationality (Gerzina 10). Born in England and raised from early adolescence to adulthood in America, Burnett slips away from any concerted effort to locate her within the borders of a single country. What this attempt to label Burnett obscures is what Burnett's writing itself tells us: her literature conceptualizes place regionally, not nationally. For the first twenty-five years of her life, Burnett lived in profoundly regional locales that deviated strongly from the perceived national standard, first spending her early childhood in England's Lancashire, and subsequently moving to East Tennessee in adolescence. Her experiences in these places cemented in Burnett a lifelong appreciation for distinct regional idiosyncrasies, and served as the colorful sieve through which Burnett strained her life's fiction. Although Burnett was conscious of "learning" regionality through dialect in a way that separates her from those who were born natively into it, her sense of place remained intensely local throughout her life. Her fiction is relatively uninterested in exploring constructs of nationality, and therefore distinct from other postbellum U.S. regional writing, which frequently critiques the nation-state or indirectly supports it through a touristic fetishizing of local place. Instead, Burnett's regional fiction continually crosses national borders, producing an oscillating translocality that reflects the local lives she lived in two separate countries.

In the late 1850s and early '60s, when Burnett was a young child, her widowed mother Eliza struggled to maintain the financial stability of her husband's ironmonger business. A series of downsizing moves took the previously well-off Hodgson family away from their genteel Manchester neighborhood, and they ultimately settled in rough Islington Square. Through her interactions with local miners' families, the child Frances met a number of men, women, and children who spoke in varying Lancashire dialects. Those dialects' difference from her own speech proved fascinating.² The Square was a vital crucible for a child thirsty to learn and speak dialect. As Burnett wrote in her third-person autobiography, *The One I Knew the Best of All*:

[T]he Small Person adored Street children. She adored above all things the dialect they spoke, and the queer things they said . . . She learned to speak the dialect as well as any of them, though it was a furtively indulged in accomplishment. She had two or three clever little girl friends who were fluent in it . . . They used to tell each other stories in it, and carry on animated conversations without losing a shade of its flavor. They said, "Wilt tha" and "Wheer art goin'," and "Sithee lass," and "Eh! Tha young besom, tha!" with an easy familiarity which they did not display in the matter of geography. (75)

Her Lancastrian childhood is its own region: a keenly remembered, well-defined locale Burnett attempted to create and recreate in her fiction, a place always already imaginary but no less vivid for its fantasy. Although today *The Secret Garden* is by far Burnett's best-remembered employment of dialect, she used Lancastrian speech far more often and comfortably in her writing, most notably in her first novels *That Lass O'Lowrie's* and *Haworth's*, and in the short stories "Surly Tim" and "Seth," all published in the 1870s.

² No record exists describing Burnett's native accent, but her family was an upper middle-class one with some importance in Manchester circles, and Burnett received a limited but formal education, first at the Seedley Grove school for small children, and then until adolescence at the Select Seminary for Young Ladies and Gentleman. It is likely that Burnett's family and teachers encouraged her to develop what would have been termed "cultivated" speech.

Dialect, for Burnett, was the point of entry into emotionally significant regional experience, both in writing and in lived practice. As a child in Manchester, she relied on the acquisition of local dialect to gain a sense of belonging and kinship, making close friends through literal wordplay. Later, in her published fiction, Burnett would rely heavily on the use of dialect to create a sense of regionality. Unlike much U.S. regional literature of the period, Burnett's stories often eschew or gloss over descriptions of local place, refusing to establish regionality or locality through image-based narrative. Instead, she emphasizes distinct or marked speech as a powerful shorthand for difference. This speech as rendered in her fiction often reproduces the strong emotional connotations Burnett associated with the regional communities of her childhood. The narrator of 1913's *T. Tembarom*, for example, informs readers that the second-person pronoun "tha," when spoken by a Lancastrian, is "somehow a great deal more bitter or humorous or affectionate than the mere ordinary 'You' or 'Yours.'" For Burnett, regional speech conveys feeling more precisely and effectively than standardized speech. Dialect functions as a mechanism for communicating and producing location, but it also helps manufacture the sentiment that defines much of Burnett's writing. In *Sensational Designs*, Jane Tompkins singles out Burnett as one of the nineteenth-century women writers whose sentimentalism ensured her rejection from a twentieth-century literary canon. Burnett's writing is unapologetically sentimental, designed to evoke an unmediated response in readers. Although plot plays a large role in producing this sentiment—lovers die from unrequited love, disabled children rise from wheelchairs—the argot of Burnett's characters is equally complicit. Dialect's primary role in her stories is not to create a sense of "reality," as in much dialect literature of the late nineteenth

century, but to evoke heightened sensation through theatricality and the self-conscious performance of unfamiliar language.

Burnett's time in Lancashire ended abruptly in 1865, when Eliza Hodgson, frustrated by the lack of economic opportunities in Manchester, decided to take her children to America. The Hodgsons settled in the town of New Market, a small community in the eastern part of Tennessee, living there for a year before moving to nearby Knoxville. As in Manchester, the teenage Frances was captivated by dialect. She considered local Appalachian speech to be its own distinct language, and "delighted in conversation with the natives . . . who had a wonderful dialect. As she had learned to speak Lancashire she learned to speak East Tennessean and North Carolinian." Burnett, who had a keen eye for the power of narrative from a young age, immediately began the process of writing herself into this linguistic tradition: "She found American [dialect] interesting and rather liked it. That was part of the Story, too" (*The One I Knew the Best of All* 262). Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina notes that Burnett "practiced writing out scraps of stories and Bible passages in a variety of dialects in what remained of her mother's ledger books," endeavoring to represent on the page what, until the 1870s, remained largely unwritten vernacular (8). Burnett's attempted mastery of local dialect occurred concurrently with her early attempts to write fiction, and the two efforts would collude during the first decade of her literary career. The vast majority of Burnett's stories and novels published during the 1860s and 1870s feature heavy amounts of Lancastrian or Appalachian dialect.

Although Burnett wrote short stories in Manchester, destroying most before the trip across the Atlantic, it was in Tennessee that she began to intentionally hone her craft

towards a career, publishing her first stories in 1868 at the age of nineteen.³ Many years after her death, Burnett's son Vivian put together an unpublished "biographical arrangement" of his mother's correspondence, and in these documents Burnett is adamant that her years in New Market and Knoxville were critically formative for her, as a writer and a human being. "I lived among educated—but not literary people," Burnett writes, "until I was brought to America at about fifteen years of age. Then, for a time, my life was spent among people who scarcely read at all. And yet I feel that among them I served a part of my apprenticeship that has accounted for much" (2-10). Vivian Burnett elaborates: "Her life [in New Market and Knoxville] brought her close to *human* material, and gave her real opportunities to study it" (ibid). Burnett became a writer through her participation and interest in the co-constructive processes of regionality. It is no surprise, therefore, that much of her early fiction takes place in well-defined local spaces. *That Lass o' Lowrie's* and *Haworth's* are her first novels, both set in Lancaster, but in addition to these works Burnett wrote a not insignificant number of Appalachian local color stories, dialect-heavy regional fiction that takes place in rural East Tennessee and North Carolina. Of the novels and short stories she wrote that take place in the United States, a full five are arguably regional. Three of these are short stories. "Seth," "Esmeralda," and "Lodusky," were published in 1877, during the first decade of Burnett's career and around the time she left New Market for Washington D.C. A short novel, *Louisiana*, was published in 1880, and a second short novel, *In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim*, in 1899, well after Burnett became a critical and commercial success. What

³ Throughout a career that spanned more than fifty years, Burnett never once received a rejection from a publisher.

limited critical discussion of Burnett's U.S. regional fiction exists centers around *Louisiana*, arguably the most substantial of the above works for the way it engages with issues of class and social mobility. However, in the pages that follow, I examine "Seth" and "Esmeralda," the two stories that explicitly manufacture translocality in a way that anticipates Burnett's slippery translocal region thirty-four years later in *The Secret Garden*. For the most part, "Seth" and "Esmeralda" are fairly boilerplate tales. They rely on overly familiar tropes of romantic separation, and detailed or dimensional characterization falls victim to the production of admittedly mawkish sentiment. Nevertheless, place in both stories refuses neat boundaries, suggesting a radical realignment of spatial orientation that bypasses national constructs for local ones, regardless of continent.

"Seth" opens with the introduction of one local color to another, signaling immediately the story's commitment to crossings and the production of unique contact zones. Young Seth Raynor, "only a lad of nineteen or twenty," arrives in the fictional mining town of Black Creek in Eastern Tennessee, as part of an influx of new immigrant labor: "principally Welsh and English miners, with an occasional Irishman." Seth, like Burnett, hails from Lancashire, and has the thick working-class dialect to prove it. "Fro' Lancashire," he informs the fascinated workers, "fro' th' Deepton coalmines theer. You'll know th' name on 'em, I ha' no doubt. Th' same company owns 'em as owns these." Seth immigrates to East Tennessee with the aim of working for a company that also operates in his hometown in Lancashire. While much Appalachian fiction written by "outsiders" or non-natives attempts to simplify mountain life into something that fits a quiet bedtime story, the events of "Seth" are catalyzed by the postbellum production of Appalachian

transnational trade and industry. Burnett alludes to the real-world existence of a complex economics of exchange that operates not only at the transnational level but at the local level as well.⁴ This opening gambit gestures towards an intricate, nebulous world of transnational capitalism that can only be understood and made accessible through communicating the lived, embodied experiences of its workers. Burnett conveys the strangeness of this heterogeneous contact zone through the jarring intrusions of dialect and description, having Seth react in Lancastrian speech to his new Appalachian surroundings. “Iverything’s new,” Seth says to the mine owner’s son, Langley, of the mountains, forest, and sky. “I feel aw lost sometoimes, an’ feared-loike . . . Happen it’s th’ bigness, an’ quiet, an’ th’ lonely look, an’ happen it’s summat wrong in mysen’.” Contrasts between urban and rural, East and West, or North and South are central to descriptions of locality in nearly all U.S. local color, but “Seth” produces its regional space through contrast with another, far off locale, acknowledging that identities form through mobilities *and* through place-based interactions.

As in all of Burnett’s fiction, dialect and dialogue serves as both unsettled signifier of difference and emotional amplifier. What distinguishes “Seth” from Burnett’s

⁴ This local-transnational exchange is verifiably historical. After the Civil War, the United States required fuel from the Appalachian coal mines to feed its rapid industrialization, and entrepreneurs descended like locusts into West Virginia, Kentucky, East Tennessee, and North Carolina. Not all of these capitalists were American. As in “Seth,” some came from other countries, chiefly England. In his reading of class in turn-of-the-century Southeastern Kentucky’s coalfields, Alan Banks relates an anecdote that deftly illustrates how the construction of postbellum Appalachia depends on flows and exchanges external to the region. “In 1885 or 1886,” he writes, “Alexander A. Arthur, a representative of Scotch and English capitalists who owned and lumbered a large tract of land in North Carolina, entered Bell County to examine firsthand the famous tracts of timber there . . . Within a year Arthur was in London, giving glowing accounts of what he had seen” (333). Thanks to Arthur’s reports, the American Association Ltd. was capitalized with a stock of \$2 million, and as a direct result of these investments, the L&N railroad came to Bell County’s Pineville. What was once a rural, comparatively independent and isolated place became a manufacturing center: “Middlesboro would grow from a town of fifty souls in the spring of 1889 to an industrial city of over 10,000 by 1892” (ibid). While this occurred more than a decade after Burnett wrote and published “Seth,” her local color fiction reflects the very contemporary and pressing shift in Appalachian regionality away from relative isolation and towards cosmopolitanism.

other U.S. regional fiction is that the difference dialect points towards is gendered as well as classed. Seth responds with anxiety to the contrast between Lancashire's "cool an' smoke an' crowd" and East Tennessee's wide, fresh splendor, explaining to Langley that it troubles him "in a manner to—to ha' to look so high." The reference has more than one connotation. Not until the end of "Seth" do readers discover that Seth Raynor is biologically female, passing as a man in order to journey on his own across the ocean and be physically close to Langley, whom he's loved romantically since their infrequent, casual conversations back in Deepton.⁵ In retrospect, this reference to "looking high" refers to more than Seth's interactions with his new geography, implicating the class gap between Seth and Langley. By following Langley, Seth is aiming upwards, but as we discover later, Seth "didna expect nowt," certain that he must always love Langley from a distance. Local place becomes the visible marker onto which Seth writes his distress, and the tall pines and mountains of East Tennessee become signifiers for the connection he silently dreams of achieving. Like the Deepton mines, translated across national borders, Seth's affections and anxieties, born in smoky, gloomy Lancashire, reaffirm themselves in the hills of Black Creek.

Dialect in "Seth" is shorthand for difference, but importantly, Burnett also uses it to obscure difference, at least temporarily. Nothing in the narrator's first descriptions of Seth leads readers to believe he is biologically female. Burnett even emphasizes that "his outward appearance was [not] particularly interesting or suggestive of approaching

⁵ Burnett never refers to Seth in narration by any other pronoun but male, even after Seth is revealed after death to have been born "Jinny." Only one character, Bess, uses female pronouns for him, and even then speaks of Jinny only as she existed in Deepton. The story fails to clarify whether Seth identifies as male—we learn that Jinny often wore male clothing back in Deepton—or whether his cross-dressing is solely a means to come to America without garnering attention. Like Burnett, I use male pronouns for Seth.

excitement.” Seth’s dialect defines him; framed at first as a showy quirk, it distracts readers from looking too closely at other parts of his characterization. In *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America*, Gavin Jones examines dialect’s use as a mediator of social difference, suggesting that viewing dialect literature solely as colonialist or appropriative—an attempt to fetishize the “other”—obscures the numerous, complex applications of linguistic difference (8-9). Although the “cult of the vernacular” was often patronizing, nostalgic, and reinforced problematic social hierarchies, the differing functions of dialect in U.S. literature failed to confirm the dominance of a standardized elite speech, evincing through its hybrid existence and heterogeneity the relevance of modernity’s cultural fragmentations. “Seth” is an exceptional example of the way dialect-heavy regional literature could and did function as a complicated mix of hegemonic reproduction and hegemonic critique. There is no doubt that Burnett maintains a decidedly elitist sense of separation between standardized speech and dialect speech in much of her regional fiction, “Seth” included. The wealthy Langley, for example, muses that the connection between Lancashire-speaking Bess and Seth must be a “primitive and uncouth love . . . [developing] to bind the homely lives together, and warm and brighten them.” Nevertheless, Langley’s perception is limited, and so is the perception of the reader who believes Burnett’s story reproduces cultural and class hierarchies without subtle but significant subversions. The revelation that Seth has been passing as male all along is critical to our understandings of the text’s attempts at bringing together heterogeneous, hybridized elements without resolving them, in the tradition of a U.S. regional literature defined by its perennial oscillations between positions, voices, and desires. Seth’s gender is never resolved as definitely male or

female, through Burnett's reluctance to assign him female pronouns even after Bess tells Langley the story of Jinny, Seth's alter ego, seemingly assigning Seth a "true" sex. Burnett also refuses to erase or subsume linguistic difference, mirroring the story's comfort with a protagonist who does not meet other norms. Although Seth dies three-quarters through the story, Lancashire dialect still remains a critical part of the story even after his death, with Bess speaking literally on Seth's behalf. Dialect therefore keeps its relevance—even implied superiority—alongside standardized speech, both forms retaining value and meaning.⁶

In the last lines of "Seth," Burnett's narrator describes the setting of Seth's deathbed, as Langley, now aware of Seth's history, leans down and kisses the body's forehead in farewell and blessing: "The moonlight, streaming in as before, fell upon the closed eyes, and hands folded in the old, old fashion upon the fustian jacket: the low whisper of the pines crept downward like a sigh." This is a meeting of disparate elements without resolution. Seth's body, an emblem of fusions, absorbs the moonlight of East Tennessee while remaining clothed in the garb of Lancashire. The pines, before "so high" and inaccessible, "sway[ing] [their] dark plume against the clear blue," lower towards Seth's body in silent outreach, denying his earlier belief in their separateness and estrangement. Lancaster and East Tennessee will never overlap, but they can, "Seth" suggests, communicate. Burnett's regional locations, like Seth's gender identity, function

⁶ On Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima*, Gavin Jones wryly comments that the character Hyacinth "dies from the peculiarly British disease of class conflict" (88). One kind of reading of "Seth" might determine that Seth dies from a similar disease, expiring after apparently catching cholera but in reality dying because he cannot survive without Langley's affections, impossible to translate across class borders. However, Seth's reluctance to reveal himself to Langley seems to have other motives besides the class barrier that exists between them. As Bess reveals, Seth was decidedly homely, without the support of family, and relatively dull of wit; he believed he had nothing much to recommend him other than his tenderness. If the disease of class conflict or barrier is a decidedly British one, then Seth may suffer from an American illness: the fear that individual will may not be enough to supplant circumstances.

as a series of assorted routes rather than isolated, homogeneous positions. They move towards one another without merging, suggesting connection and crossing but never absorption. “Seth” fails to subsume one locality into the other, nonstandard speech into standardized dialect, and one gender into the other. This failure, however, is productive, calling attention to how social and physical flows across locales take shape through embedded, embodied practices.

Although “Seth” obscures the narrator’s outside position by staying in a tight third-person point of view, another one of Burnett’s regional stories boldly foregrounds it. The narrator of “Esmeralda” (1877) is a Parisian resident, Monsieur Desmarres, who teaches English to native French speakers and French to English, American, German, or Italian pupils.⁷ While at the Louvre’s *Grande Galerie*, Desmarres and his artist wife, Clélie, observe a father and daughter regarding one of the artworks “hopelessly,” appearing overwhelmed. The couple attempt to place the nationality of these two outsiders—are they English? American?—and are eventually rewarded with the father and daughter’s speech, simultaneously clarifying and obfuscating the tourists’ origin. As Clélie comments, “They are Americans, but of an order entirely new.” As Desmarres and Clélie discover later, the father (referred to by Desmarres only as “Monsieur”) and the daughter, Esmeralda, are from “some barren mountain lands in North Carolina,” lately come into wealth through iron deposits and brought over to Paris against their will by Esmeralda’s greedy mother, who wishes to marry her off. Esmeralda’s mother—also unnamed—forces Esmeralda to take art lessons from Clélie, and the miserable Esmeralda and Monsieur confide in them the extent of their anguish at being so far away from home.

⁷ Desmarres’s first name is never mentioned.

Eventually, Esmeralda's former fiancé from North Carolina, told to stay away by Esmeralda's mother, follows Esmeralda to Paris in a desperate attempt to reunite. The tormented Esmeralda chooses him against her mother's wishes and with her father's blessing; the good end happily, and the bad unhappily.

Like "Seth," "Esmeralda" exudes a paternalistic snobbery, and even exceeds that other story in its depiction of reductive Appalachian stereotypes, attitudes which seem at first glance to legitimize its marginal status among Burnett's oeuvre. Critical regionalist scholarship firmly rejects the inclusion of fetishizing or othering fiction among regional ranks, marking distinctions between texts that speak from a marginal position and texts that actively marginalize. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse argue that regionalism involves "looking with" and local color "looking at," where the one who looks has a perspective "framed as universal and transcendent" (36). Admittedly, "Esmeralda" looks *at* Esmeralda, Monsieur, and Esmeralda's beau Wash, without making an overt effort to look *with* them. These characters remain, for the most part, in a distinct category of their own, marked by Desmarres and Clélie as delightful objects of provincial curiosity, their unwillingness to learn or educate themselves in cosmopolitan ways a signifier of their limited provincialism. Nevertheless, I believe reducing "Esmeralda" to a binary that either resigns it to "looking with" (not possible) or "looking at" (not the whole story) obscures how Burnett plays with the relationship between regional outsider and regional insider, recontextualizing their exchanges in a translocal milieu.

One of the aspects that makes "Esmeralda" a regional text, despite Burnett's willingness to preserve a problematic provincial/cosmopolitan binary, is the very perspective that ensures the existence of the binary in the first place. U.S. fiction that

fetishizes or idealizes regional difference traditionally narrates from a position vague or familiar enough to stand in for that of the imagined urban reader. As Fetterley and Pryse claim, the one who looks is the one whose perspective is universal, but in “Esmeralda,” Burnett draws considerable attention to the point of view from which this story is told. Desmarres is an outsider not only to Esmeralda, Monsieur, and Wash, but to the implied reader located in the United States. His occasional asides underscore his foreignness and draw a blunt demarcation between himself and Burnett’s audience: “One would always imagine so many things concerning Americans. They were so extraordinary a people; they acquired wealth by such peculiar means; their country was so immense; their resources were so remarkable.”⁸ Desmarres looks *at* Esmeralda, Monsieur, and Wash so explicitly and so visibly that “Esmeralda” ultimately becomes a text deconstructing the vagrancy of perspective: the meandering gap between the observations of some and the lived experience of others. This is the difference between a work that details the interactions of isolated dialect-speaking mountain folk from a non-dialect speaking third-person perspective, like the stories in Mary Noailles Murfree’s *In the Tennessee Mountains* (1886), and a work that emphasizes the distance between character and narrator, *and* narrator and reader. We observe Murfree’s characters inside their homes and on their land, the picturesque mountain setting an idealized environment that lulls readers into an easy, unchallenging relationship with the text. In “Esmeralda,” however, Desmarres and Clélie first encounter Esmeralda and her father at the Louvre, and proceed to stare openly at them, taking in their unfamiliar clothing, body language, and speech.

⁸ Although these musings are flattering and reinforce rather than challenge Americans’ perceptions of themselves, they nevertheless mark Americanness as peculiar and distinctive in opposition (to France) rather in isolation.

That this scene occurs in a museum highlights rather than obfuscates the extent to which Esmeralda and Monsieur are objects to be seen by people who find them difficult to understand. Importantly, Desmarres and Clélie's foreignness is also on display; Desmarres's perspective is, by merit of being particularly Parisian, not universalized. Neither can identify this accented dialect beyond "American," and "an order entirely new," only understanding through process of elimination and their own cosmopolitan experience that these visitors must be from a fairly isolated locale. Just as Esmeralda and Monsieur are encountering new experiences, expanding their worldviews, Desmarres and Clélie are likewise expanding theirs.

Neil Campbell and Krista Comer have argued that if regionalism is to remain a relevant concept in the twenty-first century, it must by necessity gesture towards and incorporate other regionalisms. Locality must "be revised as a 'process geography' rather than a cluster of cartographic materials so that 'roots' (of the local, the placed, the regional as conventionally drawn) become more intimately connected to 'routes' (of mobility, encounter, and travel)" (Campbell 55). Burnett's "Esmeralda"—like "Seth" and like *The Secret Garden* thirty-four years later—understands that a snow globe representation of the local fails to adequately capture what makes locality germane: the provocative tensions that develop from exchanges between disparate, distant cultures. Never in "Esmeralda" does Desmarres's perspective or lifestyle achieve universality or gesture towards generalities; despite his worldly knowledge of multiple languages, Desmarres's lived life is just as localized and immediate as that of the Appalachian family. "We have our little apartment upon the fifth floor," he informs readers. "Clélie paints her little pictures." Burnett repeats *little* twice in two sentences, emphasizing the

couple's contained existence, and later uses the same word for Esmeralda and her father, describing Esmeralda's hands and her ambition as "little." While Desmarres is arguably cosmopolitan, Burnett continually deemphasizes his transnational experiences for his translocal ones. Notably, Desmarres credits the ability to accurately transcribe Monsieur's Appalachian dialect to Desmarres's familiarity with English argot: "[He had] an accent which, but for my long residence in England and familiarity with some forms of its *patois*, I should find it impossible to transcribe." The connection between these three translocal spaces—North Carolina, localized England, and a quiet life in Paris—is one only Frances Hodgson Burnett, with her peculiar background and experiences, could make.⁹ Locality, Desmarres's observation suggests, can only be understood through the experience of other localities. It is not Desmarres's knowledge of America that helps him identify and render the argot of North Carolina, but his knowledge of distinct English dialect, a linkage that directly bypasses national constructs for local ones.

If localities are formed "by a network of discourses perpetually constituted and reconstituted . . . internationally and transnationally," Burnett's story brings to our attention the way Appalachia must be understood as a site formed and reformed without as well as within, as a diverse collection of external practices and exchanges (Campbell 57). As in "Seth," local dialect does not disappear, subsumed beneath the weight of acceptable education. We might expect Esmeralda, the beautiful, unworldly ingénue, to learn how to speak "standard" English, particularly because the story's narrator is a teacher of languages, but instead it is Monsieur, Esmeralda's father, who attempts

⁹ At the time Burnett published "Seth" and "Esmeralda," she had just returned to the United States after two years in Paris with her husband. In 1877, Burnett had intimate, lived knowledge of three places: Lancashire, Appalachia, and Paris. All three make either direct or indirect appearances in "Esmeralda."

haltingly to learn another language. His choice is French, which he desires to understand “with a view to bein’ more sosherbler.” Communication is the goal, not a hierarchized edification. In “Esmeralda,” discourses, languages, and cultures meet and wrestle within a contact zone that ultimately refuses to resolve their differences, and Desmarres comes to realize that Esmeralda’s choice to return to North Carolina with Wash is not the step backward he believes it to be. “It is obscurity to which they are returning,” he says to Clélie, who disagrees with this dim view. “It is love,” she replies. In this final scene, Esmeralda, Monsieur, and Wash are again the objects at which Desmarres and Clélie look, but Clélie’s response once more emphasizes the violent contingency of perspective, drawing awareness to the discrepancies between Esmeralda’s experience and Desmarres’s limited viewpoint.

In recent years Burnett’s U.S. local color fiction has received some limited yet serious inquiry, although the focus remains on just one of her five regional texts, with “Seth” and “Esmeralda” entirely unaddressed. Michael Elliott, in *The Culture Concept: Writing and Difference in the Age of Realism* (2002), makes the brief claim that *Louisiana*, more than any other regional story, most skillfully captures the important tension in U.S. regional fiction between “culture as cultivation and culture as local identity” (45). Regionalism, he argues, pits the idealization of cultural improvement and achievement against the demand for cultural preservation and authentication. John Plotz’s *Portable Property* (2008), which examines the nineteenth-century portability of Victorian culture and objects across the globe, reads Burnett’s *Louisiana* against her Lancashire novels, *That Lass o’ Lowrie’s* and *Haworth’s*, all three published within a three-year period. Drawing from Elliott’s earlier analysis of Louisiana, Plotz uses Burnett’s regional

writing to support his argument that Great Britain lacks a literary local color tradition due to the culture of portability that permeates and defines the Victorian novel. Local color in Burnett's Lancashire novels disappears once regionalized characters ascend into gentility, leaving behind local difference for standardized propriety. Local color in Burnett's *Louisiana*, however, survives despite the protagonist's acquisition of "high" culture, as Louisiana constructs a museum after marrying her middle-class lover (102-05). For Plotz, this distinction between preservation and eradication marks the difference between Burnett's U.S. regional fiction and her Lancashire novels, and between U.S. regionalism and British provincialism more broadly.

Plotz's juxtaposition of *Louisiana* to Joan Lowrie's choices in *That Lass O' Lowrie's* is a neat and effective contrast. Louisiana and Joan pull themselves out of regional obscurity by their bootstraps, but only the latter chooses to completely leave behind the trappings of her locality, suggesting that the British local is something to be overcome rather than maintained. In choosing not to address or even mention "Seth" and "Esmeralda," however, Plotz neglects an important complication to an argument that relies, at its roots, on distinct national constructs. When applied to Burnett's oeuvre, nationality is a lens doomed to inadequacy. Even transnationality abandons important details of her work. Although *Louisiana* stays within the borders of the United States, both "Seth" and "Esmeralda" are translocal texts in which neither character chooses cultivation, and therefore they demand a reading outside a narrow either/or binary of cultivation versus identity. Seth's narrative bypasses that duality entirely, instead producing a contact zone between ideological tensions: one locality and the other, one gender and the other. "Esmeralda" does engage with cultivation and identity, but unlike

Louisiana Esmeralda explicitly rejects cultivation, choosing to return to the “obscurity” of North Carolina rather than embrace the refinement a Parisian education has to offer her. Unlike *Louisiana*, neither text concludes with the archiving of locality as fondly recalled relic; the routes and exchanges of translocality enables the local in these stories to survive without being “held apart for remembrance’s sake” (102). For “Seth and “Esmeralda,” the local takes shape primarily *through* these routes, not in spite of them. These cultural, gendered, and geographic negotiations across national borders suggest that locality has lasting relevance beyond the museum if produced through embodied, detailed practices that explicitly invite multiple unresolved perspectives.

With the introduction of *The Secret Garden* into his reading, the limits of Plotz’s nationalist binary appear in starker relief. *Garden* builds, Plotz claims, on “an enduring English legacy of national cultural portability profoundly divergent from” the interests of American local color fiction” (119). Mary Lennox and Colin Craven, children of the elite, spend the novel “mastering Yorkshire and Yorkshireness—but only from the perspective of the sort of outsider who can come in, learn the flora and the lingo, and apply those lessons across the world.” In short, *Garden* demonstrates the differences between U.S. regional fiction and British provincial writing because its regionality serves the interests of nationalist, imperialist portable culture. While *Garden*, like most of Burnett’s works, seethes with undeniable classism, racism, and colonialist ideologies that influence the way the narrative unfolds, Plotz’s reading neglects the important subtleties of Burnett’s negotiation between localities. Nothing in *Garden* suggests that Mary and Colin will, as Plotz claims, “learn what they need of local ways and then continue their passage outward into Greater Britain” (120), as Mary and Colin’s education in the garden leads

them primarily to a fascination with growing things in Yorkshire, “like Dickon,” as Colin points out. There is no suggestion in the text that either wish to leave Yorkshire, or will ever leave it.¹⁰ If Plotz’s portability argument falters with lack of evidence, then there seems to be nothing that ties *Garden* irrevocably to England, besides its setting. *Garden*’s nationality is beyond the point; its locality is what matters. Like “Seth” and “Esmeralda,” two texts that also rely heavily on dialect to shape region, *Garden* produces translocality rather than locality, the imagined site of Yorkshire shaped and mediated through Burnett’s experiences writing regionalism in and through the United States, and inspiration from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. As a volatile amalgam, Burnett’s Yorkshire ultimately mimics unstable productions of region in U.S. local color fiction rather than the insularity of British provincial literature.

Despite growing up forty miles by road from West Yorkshire, Burnett had no verifiable personal experience with the Yorkshire region, and so her production of it in *The Secret Garden* is necessarily an amalgam of fictions, including but not limited to the most famous Yorkshire novel of all time. The similarities between Burnett and the Brontës’ localities have been somewhat overstated. In a section of her article subtitled “Connections Between Burnett and the Brontës,” Susan E. James notes that Burnett was born in Manchester “some twenty-six miles, as the crow flies, from Haworth,” where the Brontë sisters lived. Although James does not explicitly say so, this detail is implicitly meant to correlate Burnett’s experience of place with that of the Brontës by minimizing

¹⁰ If Colin *does* take what he’s learned in Yorkshire to the outside world, it will most likely be as a soldier in the British Army. *Garden*’s publication date is 1911, just three years before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and if *Garden* is set contemporaneously, Colin will be conscripted before the war ends. Any reading of Colin’s future as colonialist master “applying . . . lessons across the world” must take into account that Colin faces a grim survival statistic as a now-healthy British man born at the turn of the century.

the distance between their two homes. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina repeats James's claim: "Burnett spent the first fifteen years of her life only twenty-six miles from where the Brontës had lived in Yorkshire" (Horne and Sanders 26). Collapsing Lancashire over Yorkshire, however, is not easily done; Manchester and Haworth are in fact more than forty miles by accessible road when measuring by human distances, and are highly distinctive social spaces due to historical conflicts and a firm sense of impenetrable regional identity. Although the enmity that began with the War of the Roses shifted into joking rivalry by the late nineteenth century, Lancashire and Yorkshire retained and still retain their separateness.¹¹ Yorkshire, like any region, is not a homogenous body; nevertheless, it possesses a long history of robust self-identification. "Yorkshire people," David Neave writes, "retain a strong believe in themselves as a breed set apart from the rest [of England]. . . Probably for no other county is this sense of a separate identity promoted so extensively" (184). In addition to this stark cultural divide between Yorkshire and its neighboring counties, the distance prevents any assumption, in the absence of proof otherwise, that a young Burnett might have developed an outsider's familiarity with Yorkshire. Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull point out in *Migration and Mobility in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century* that "only in the twentieth century with . . . development of the motor car did personal travel throughout Britain become more common . . . Migration was dominated by short distance mobility" (56). Forty miles

¹¹ In April 2013, the Yorkshire Times printed an article titled "Cuts Continue: Yorkshire and Lancashire to be Merged," which stated that the latest austerity measure by the British government revealed "that the new county will be renamed 'Larkshire' and will be symbolised [sic] by a pink rose." The article inspired an "avalanche" of comments from outraged and horrified readers in both Yorkshire and Lancashire counties, who were no doubt mollified once they learned the article was an April Fools joke. Nevertheless, the incident reveals that Northern England is still home to residents who feel very strongly about the separation of regional identities.

between West Yorkshire and Lancashire may seem a relatively short distance today, but in the 1860s, when Burnett was growing up in Manchester, the gulf was considerably more substantial.

No confirmation exists that Burnett read *Wuthering Heights*, but we do know that she was a voracious reader, particularly of classic British texts, and can therefore safely presume she was familiar with Emily Brontë's novel. This knowledge successfully addresses a pressing question: With so much personal knowledge of Lancaster, and a history of writing and setting successful stories in that same space, why did Burnett choose Yorkshire as the location for Misselthwaite Manor? The answer is *Wuthering Heights*. By placing *The Secret Garden* in a locale that immediately conjures the emotional romanticism and evocative surroundings of Yorkshire, Burnett invokes something even more potent than lived regional experience: fictional regional experience ingrained in Western cultural memory. "Yorkshire," as a name and a concept, is shorthand for a profound, memorable, and widely-known locality. What relationship that locality has to the experience of real Yorkshire men and Yorkshire women is not Burnett's concern; the word itself is an incantation that summons Brontë's detail. "Moor," in particular, belongs to Brontë within the literary realm, and Burnett refuses careful descriptions of Yorkshire's wilder spaces exterior to Misselthwaite Manor, leaving the moors to Heathcliff, Cathy, and the public imagination. In the third chapter of *Garden*, Mary Lennox crosses the Yorkshire moors at night, the rain and absence of light obscuring her surroundings from both Mary and the reader. As Susan E. James points out, Burnett's "limited working knowledge" of the moors likely prevented her from elaborating further and accurately on this new place, but Burnett's uneasy, vague

descriptions—particularly when contrasted with Brontë’s—also gesture towards her particular approach towards regional writing. Mary cannot reconcile the disconnect between her perceptions of the land and its reality. “I feel,” she says to Mrs. Medlock, “as if it might be the sea, as if there were water on it” (20). Mrs. Medlock’s reassurances do not comfort Mary, and the girl thinks of the moor as “a wide expanse of black ocean through which she was passing on a strip of dry land.” Although Burnett cleverly disguises her missing knowledge with imaginative perceptions, this scene is far more than an attempt to obscure. Mary, previously enclosed in a nursery and a bungalow without any interactions with the outside world, is unable to conceive of the moor’s borders, boundaries, or even its manifestations, and therefore imagines it as an unpredictable, moving thing. The juxtaposition of the small child body with the wide, desolate regional place signals *Garden*’s commitment to a framework of instability, an aesthetics of wildness and border-crossing that resembles U.S. literature’s productions of locality rather than the homogeneity of British provincial fiction.¹² Although we never see Mary enter the moors again, this scene signals that *Garden*—unlike *Wuthering Heights*—disregards the pains and pleasures of being entrenched for the disquieting possibilities of oscillation.¹³

¹² John Plotz distinguishes between U.S. regionalism and British provincialism, arguing that the latter is “England writ small” in order to ensure portability. British provincial novels generate well-marked spaces that nevertheless harmonize successfully with any number of readers’ lives (98). Regionalism in the United States can be conceived of apart from national sentiment, whereas British provincialism is always sublimated within the national.

¹³ An explicit, winking reference to *Wuthering Heights* occurs when Mary is awakened in the night by the wind “wuthering ‘round the corners.” Burnett juxtaposes this allusion with another reference to a novel by a Brontë: immediately after this sound, she hears a mysterious voice crying out. Colin is not precisely a madwoman in the attic like Bertha Rochester, but he *is* a disabled boy kept hidden from Mary in the recesses of a great house. Many others have explored the similarities between *Jane Eyre* and *The Secret Garden*; see Ann Thwaite, Shirley Foster, and Judy Simons.

Even the secret garden itself has translocal roots. Burnett's residence at lush Maytham Hall, Kent, in the early years of the twentieth century is the agreed-upon inspiration for her most well-known novel, and Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina notes that "in fine weather Burnett wrote outdoors in the walled garden, with a tamed robin to keep her company" (*Annotated* xxii). The garden space itself is a dominant fixture in British literature, art, and culture, an aesthetic diversion to be cultivated and prized for its beauty (Crawford). Yet *The One I Knew Best of All* reveals other gardens outside the borders of England that portend Mary, Colin, and Dickon's garden. Joe Sutliff Sanders and Jackie Horne single out Burnett's detailed description of a "little thicket" in the Tennessee woods near the Hodgsons' home, a snug, enclosed place that Burnett hacked her way into with the help of her older brothers (xvi). This thicket contained blackberries, rose briars, and other local plants, and Burnett charmingly describes her communications with birds who would make "encouraging movements" towards her, an exchange that mirrors interactions between Dickon and the robin in *Garden* (271). Despite the geographic dissimilarities between East Tennessee's wide open spaces and the enclosed environment of the secret garden in Yorkshire, Burnett's descriptions of the former in *The One I Knew* play up the intimacy and emotional affinity the mountain ranges and pine-trees inspire, subverting assumptions that sweeping landscapes disallow the production of closeness. Her colorful language in her autobiography—and much later, in *Garden*—recalls the vibrancy of U.S. regionalist Hamlin Garland's hued regional fiction, written during the same time period:

[The] pine-trees seemed to have grown with a view to adding to the spectacular effect by outlining their feathery branches and straight, slender stems against the pink, pearl, amber, blue, apple-green, daffodil sky,

growing intenser [sic] every moment until the golden flood leaped up above the tallest feathered pine. In the middle of the day they paled into faint blue in a haze of sunny light and heat, at sunset they were violet with touches of deep rose. The Small Person began to think of them as of human things . . . [S]he had that instinct of kinship—of somehow being part of their purple, their clear dark outline. (*The One I Knew* 267-8)

The place was a wilderness of autumn gold and purple and violet blue and flaming scarlet and on every side were sheaves of late lilies standing together—lilies which were white or white and ruby . . . Late roses climbed and hung and clustered and the sunshine deepening the hue of the yellowing trees made one feel that one stood in an embowered temple of gold. (*The Secret Garden* 248)

As L. Frank Baum does in *Oz*, Burnett universally writes local color with an emphasis on both words. Despite the marked differences between these two settings, demonstrated through plant varieties and surrounding landscapes, the similar lushness and vibrancy of these two local spaces suggests an important emotional connection that defies national borders. The local space of “Yorkshire” in *Garden* is made possible in part through Burnett’s local experiences in America. Burnett’s local landscapes have both roots and range, demonstrating that the garden in Misselthwaite Manor is not nearly as walled-up as Burnett’s descriptions indicate, but a space as shifting as the moors Mary dreads.

As in all of Burnett’s earlier regional stories and novels, *The Secret Garden* leans heavily on the production of local dialect. Yorkshire itself collapses onto renderings of dialect, so that what might more precisely be described as “speaking in a Yorkshire dialect” becomes “talking Yorkshire,” the region conflated with and inextricable from the argot. In this way, Burnett creates a regional space that foregrounds the social as well as the natural. Although the garden is certainly a major centerpiece of the novel, what makes *Garden* regional rather than simply rural is the process of creating and identifying specific, contingent variance through local dialect. Burnett’s surviving correspondence

makes little mention of her research during the year she wrote *Garden*; there is no source to verify the origins of her characters' dialect. However, some important clues exist that suggest dialect in *Garden*, like the region of Yorkshire itself in the novel, stems from a heterogeneous collection of sources and experiences.¹⁴ Returning to Burnett's third-person autobiography, *The One I Knew the Best of All*, Burnett refers explicitly to several dialect phrases she learned from her girlfriends in Islington Square, Lancaster. Among these, "wilt tha" (will you) appears once in *Garden*, spoken by gardener Ben Weatherstaff; "Eh!", an exclamation signaling emotional emphasis, appears a full sixty-three times, almost always in the mouth of exuberant maidservant Martha Sowerby; and while "tha' young besom, tha," a phrase Burnett particularly relished as a child, does not make it into *Garden* wholly intact, Ben refers to Dickon Sowerby as a "young besom," and Martha quotes her mother's frustrated outburst, "Tha' young vixen, tha!" Burnett maps her own familiarity with Lancaster dialect onto her fictional Yorkshire, signaling yet again that Yorkshire in *Garden* is not an attempt at faithful reproductions of "real" Yorkshire, but the product of Burnett's efforts to differentiate "standard" from "non-standard."¹⁵ In this way, her Yorkshire is a locality mapped and constituted through time

¹⁴ The easy assumption is that Burnett took her knowledge of dialect from Charlotte Brontë. *Wuthering Heights* has one character, Joseph, who speaks in pronounced Yorkshire dialect, but his argot is decidedly thicker than any in *Garden*, and Brontë renders many words in such a way that differentiate their pronunciation from identical words found in Burnett's novel. If *Garden* is indeed set in North Yorkshire, as the reference to Thwaite Station would suggest, then the difference might be traced to distance and inter-regional disparities, as Thwaite and Haworth (where Brontë lived) are fifty miles distant. However, there is no evidence to suggest Burnett was familiar enough with North Yorkshire dialect to differentiate it adequately from West Yorkshire dialect. It does not appear that Burnett received inspiration from *Wuthering Heights* for her use of dialect in *Garden*. Perhaps her obvious comfort with rendering Appalachian and Lancastrian dialect gave her the confidence to execute Yorkshire speech without relying on Brontë's template.

¹⁵ Although the equivalence is easy to make, regional literature generally requires more than the presence of dialect to make it regional. Dialect literature is not necessarily concerned with productions of place. In Burnett's case, however, dialect is the vehicle through which she creates an emotionally significant setting, and dialect is the linchpin for the way her texts negotiate hierarchies and forms of agency. "Talking

as well as space, the region of Burnett's childhood translated across memory and onto the page. The routes and flows of regional production depend upon multiple dimensions of existence.

Besides Burnett's personal experiences, dialect in *The Secret Garden* seems to owe some provenance in part to the English Dialect Dictionary. Published between the years 1898 and 1905, the English Dialect Dictionary is one of the first comprehensive studies and collections of English-language dialect, containing more than 70,000 entries. There are few words in *Garden* that bear no resemblance to standard English equivalents, but those words that are entirely localized seem to come directly from this dictionary. Early in *Garden*, the housekeeper Mrs. Medlock muses that she's never seen "a more marred-looking young one" than Mary Lennox in her life, and the narrator interjects parenthetically that "marred is a Yorkshire word and means spoiled and pettish" (18). Under the English Dialect Dictionary definition for the use of "marred" in Yorkshire, the following appears: "(a) ppl. adj. spoilt, petted, over-indulged ; pettish, peevish; (b) v. with up: to spoil; to pet, caress; . . . Mardy, (a) adj., see (i, a) ; (*) sb. a spoilt child." Burnett's use of "spoiled and pettish" in *Garden*, the latter a somewhat uncommon word, suggests this widely-known dictionary might have been a resource. Just as the construction of region in literature is always already mediated by the ellipses of memory and fiction rather than lived experience, dialect functions as literary language in *The Secret Garden*, refereed through dictionaries and Burnett's storied memory. The gap between region and "region" in fiction is inevitably and invariable present, but by

Yorkshire" in *The Secret Garden* is a constitutive act, a kind of planting that allows the garden of communal belonging to grow and flourish.

translating her depiction of Yorkshire through her own life narrative, through a classic novel, and through a compilation of dialect words, Burnett explicitly distances Yorkshire from “Yorkshire,” making the discrepancies between signifier and signified transparent. As in “Esmeralda,” Burnett calls explicit attention to perspective, implicitly admitting the fiction of her localities while advocating for their continued relevance and meaning. The setting she builds resembles Neil Campbell’s rhizomatic space, “an interactive process of constitutive contacts and mobilities” no less local for its amalgamed routes (4).

Burnett’s understanding of regional space, primarily honed through her experiences and early literature in the United States, informs the system of exchanges that constructs region in *The Secret Garden*. John Plotz reads *Garden* as a British novel, contrasting it with the U.S. regionalism of Burnett’s *Louisiana* because unlike the eponymous character of that second text, Mary and Colin do not attempt to “preserve” or archive the localisms they’ve mastered. While I will not label *Garden* as either British or American, believing that a national label undercuts Burnett’s provocative formation of regional space as paramount to her works’ settings, I do read *Garden* as espousing the concerns of U.S. literary regionalism, through its use of localisms and dialect to manufacture queerness, sentiment, exchange, domestic labor, belonging, and exclusion. However, unlike many works of U.S. regional writing, *Garden* is specifically translocal. For the most part, the novel bypasses the nation-region dialectic at the heart of U.S. regionalism and remains concerned with the relationship between multiple localities across borders. These localities include the U.S. local as experienced by Burnett and translated into her regional fiction; the imaginary space of Yorkshire; and the locally experienced bungalow in India where Mary Lennox spends the first ten years of her life.

The presence of India in *Garden* undeniably implicates imperialist histories that accompany nationalist constructs, and so *Garden* cannot be wholly extracted from the concerns of nation-building. Nevertheless, Burnett's insistence on training the lens of her novel almost exclusively on the immediate and the tangible encourages us to read the exchanges between the novel's disparate cultures through a perspective that values translocal, traveling, and embodied encounters. While the accessibility of local space enables Mary, Colin, and Dickon to shape their own environments and lives, understanding this space as *translocal* troubles assumptions that the localities of children are cordoned off with impervious boundaries.

The shadow of empire is everywhere in *The Secret Garden*, reproduced and referred to in exchanges between white wealthy children and servants both Indian and Yorkshire. India's presence appears to invite a transnational reading of this text, but the name is misleading; "India" is as much a fiction as "Yorkshire," perhaps even more so. Rather than as a nation with interior spaces that are contingent and site-specific, India figures in *Garden* specifically as a *local* site seen through the eyes of a child, the product of intensely personal experiences translated through and contrasted with Mary's life in Yorkshire.¹⁶ To read Mary and Colin's reproductions of British imperialist thinking as translocal rather than solely colonialist or even transnational is to understand that their perceptions of empire derive from local-local encounters. Mary's experiences in India are

¹⁶ India as local is still fundamentally a colonialist construction, because Burnett never takes the time to identify where in India the Lennoxes live, or how local cultures and customs in their particular area might differentiate from those in other areas. For Burnett—and quite probably for her readers—"India" is all the specificity necessary. "India" in *Garden* is only local because our sole exposure to it is through Mary's localized experiences, not because Burnett is depicting an identifiable localized place in India with a real-life analogue. While locality can and does function in ways that challenge nationalist hegemonies, locality can also simultaneously reinforce national interests. *Garden's* literary qualities stem in part from the presence and interchange between these unreconciled contradictions.

quite literally embodied in the sense that illness, pain, and abandonment mark her perception of the signifier “India.” Several details contrast with later scenes in Yorkshire, underscoring the connection between localities while differentiating between ailing, “yellow” India and verdant Yorkshire. While her parents, their friends, and their servants begin to worry about the possibility of a cholera epidemic, Mary chooses to garden: “She pretended to make a flower bed, and she stuck big scarlet hibiscus blossoms into little heaps of earth” (10). This futile action—Mary pretends to garden with already-blooming flowers, her process counterfeit—mirrors the growth to come in later chapters, both personal and literal. After everyone else has succumbed to illness, Mary wanders about the bungalow alone, finding only half-empty dinner plates on a hastily abandoned table. “How queer and quiet it is,” she muses, and the word “queer” augurs its use time and time again in subsequent pages to describe Yorkshire speech and Yorkshire behavior. Although Burnett’s India serves as a contrast to Yorkshire in nearly every way possible, the links between language and action in both settings effectively stress that Mary’s experience of both spaces is highly localized. Therefore when Mary references the specifics of her experiences in India while in Yorkshire, as she does time and time again, these references serve as indications that space in *Garden* is a contact zone of localities, where understanding is necessarily mediated by the archeological stratum of travel. An exclusively postcolonial reading of *Garden* reveals only a part of this story’s approach to agency and power. We find the other part in the mirrored relationship between the hastily abandoned fruit on the Lennoxes’ dinner table in India and the snow-white eggs, homemade bread, and raspberry jam of Colin and Mary’s garden picnics. Spatial configurations in this novel depend in large part on hierarchies that privilege white

mastery, but it is the locality and proximity of these spaces and places to child bodies that enable child access, exploration, and eventual control.

The Secret Garden's configuration of local speech and local place is fundamentally queer, a word Burnett returns to again and again with startling regularity.¹⁷ When used, the word nearly always applies to space, place, dialect, or emotion, four interrelated formations that provide the novel's narrative and aesthetic backbone. "You are going to a queer place," housekeeper Mrs. Medlock informs Mary, and although she refers specifically to Misselthwaite Manor, the descriptor equally applies to the decentered, fluctuating Yorkshire itself (16). My use of *queer* in this chapter derives from Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse's deployment of the concept in their book *Writing Out of Place*: not as irrevocably tied to sexuality or expressions thereof, but as a resistance to strict or oppressive regimes of normality. U.S. regional fiction often operates "queerly" by refusing to reproduce heteronormative plots; as Fetterley and Pryse put it, by featuring "old women with beard hairs rather than heroines falling in love" (316). The queerness of literary regionalism—writing that Fetterley and Pryse identify as out of the center and on the margins—offers "empathy as an alternative to terrorism in the approach to difference," encouraging perspectives that resist the governance of normalities (320). Regionalism proposes a queer world as eminently desirable and essential, and *The Secret Garden* delights in the production of queerness. Yorkshire-born Dickon Sowerby is a "queer, common boy," and Ben Weatherstaff speaks in a "queer shaky voice" (106, 190). Mary has a "queer, unresponsive little face," and Colin's fear of illness makes him queer, according to Mary (16). Like characters in U.S. regional

¹⁷ "Yorkshire" appears fifty-three times in *Garden*. "Queer" appears sixty-one.

writing, who find ways of performing queerness that call “into question conventional understandings of the normal . . . [making] clear that such terms as ‘odd’ and ‘normal’ have no inherent, fixed, or stable meanings,” *Garden*’s characters are defined by their liminality, their willingness to straddle ideological borders, their continued rejection of geographic or personal homogeneity. Identity construction, reflecting the imagined region of Yorkshire itself, remains unsettled and unresolved.

Queerness in *The Secret Garden*, however, does not signify one way of being.

Lori N. Brister argues that

[t]he primary function of the garden is to eradicate Mary and Colin’s [queerness], which the novel presents as unacceptable, and move the cousins toward Dickon and Ben’s queerness, that is, an acceptable queerness of possibility, fecundity, and futurity . . . Mary and Colin [must] conform to normative gender roles and nationalist ideals . . . A healthy England is dependent upon a healthy generation that promises a heteronormative, reproductive future. (101)

In this reading, Mary and Colin’s production of (sick, fearful, antisocial, foreign) queerness is defined by its liminality, and is ultimately undesirable within the world of the text. On the other hand, Dickon and Ben’s production of queerness allows for the happy heterogeneity of attractive elements: nature, the maternal fused with the masculine, the human who seems to be part animal. Brister’s reading claims that India and the sickness India signifies must be eradicated so that English queerness alone survives. “The novel,” she states, “presents a model of queerness in which non-English queerness must be eradicated, while rural, English queerness is preserved” (109). While Brister is right to read queerness as doing multivalent work in *Garden*, as both desirable and unwanted, Burnett’s positioning of *Garden*’s setting as Yorkshire rather than generic England complicates a nationalist dichotomy of English queerness versus non-English queerness.

The productive peculiarity Burnett advocates is not necessarily English queerness, but *Yorkshire* queerness: the delightful idiosyncrasy of being local, and the power that proximity incurs. The translocality of Yorkshire and Yorkshire ways, “Yorkshire’s” commitment to a U.S. regionalist ethos of instability and sentiment, ultimately engenders the production of child access and agency. As Alun Morgan points out, *Garden* creates a “place of transformation” that operates in multiple directions: “[P]laces themselves can be equally transformed through the agency of children” (84). Mary and Colin learn to adopt localized dialect and behavior, decidedly “queer” speech that erases nationalized markers from their language, and that marks their emotional and articulated difference from homogenized English norms. Local space is the vehicle through which they become social and geographic actors, children who shape and reshape their surroundings. This acquired agency in and of itself is queer, still embracing difference and refusing the norms of mastery Colin’s health and future seem to invite. Once out of the wheelchair, Colin may assume his “rightful” place as future lord of Misselthwaite Manor, but his goal to find out “about people and creatures and everything that grows” has a qualifier: “like Dickon,” the lower-class boy on whom Colin models his healthy self (124). The knowledge Colin seeks is knowledge available outside of books and universities, suggesting an equity of opportunity and access that subverts the expected reach his privileged class position yields him. Joe Sutliff Sanders notes that Colin’s literal and emotional ascent from invalid to strong and steady “as any boy in Yorkshire” is coeval with increased descriptions that mark his similarity to his mother, effectively feminizing him as he assumes the mantle of “Master Colin.” Mary may be relegated somewhat to the sidelines in favor of Colin’s story by the novel’s end, but as Sanders also points out, she

in fact gains an extraordinary amount of power for a ten-year-old orphan girl: “Mary transforms her miserable new home into a place she enjoys, she gets to play where others are forbidden, and she gains dominion over the garden, the son, the father, and even the mother” (Sanders 105). The order is upset, reorganized, queered, all through learned localized behavior that enables these child characters to affect their social and geographic environments.

Garden's “queer speech” is not only queer in that it evokes difference, but in the way it simultaneously suggests locality and mobility, resurrecting the social and geographic flows that defines regional texts “Seth” and “Esmeralda” through a productively queer “excess of meaning” (Sedgwick 8). The way Burnett uses dialect in *Garden* has far more in common with her earlier regional writing and with dialect literature in the nineteenth century than with the use of Yorkshire dialect in novels like *Wuthering Heights*. U.S. dialect fiction in the late nineteenth century—Burnett's short stories included—reflects contemporary linguistic conflicts between dominant and subordinate ways of speaking, rejecting easy hierarchies. Although many studies of U.S. dialect fiction view writing in that tradition as inherently ideologically repressive, Gavin Jones contends that dialect literature often negotiates these tensions without wholly advocating for uniformity or the supremacy of standardization: “The ability to disrupt the smoothness of reading by disrupting the apparent oneness of writing corresponded to the wider tendency of literary dialect to disrupt America's sense of national linguistic unity” (48-9). Unlike British provincialisms, which, as Jones quotes critic C.A. Bristed, “keep their place” by refusing social and physical variability, American dialect would never be fully polarized between standardized and non-standardized forms, instead constantly

negotiating between class and geographic difference (26). In *The Secret Garden*, as in American regional fiction, dialect is surprisingly mobile: not, as in *That Lass O' Lowrie's*, something eradicated once the dialect speaker ascends to a higher class, or even something to be preserved and archived, as in *Louisiana*, but something to be discarded and taken up as suits the needs of those within the local space. Mary and Colin famously learn Yorkshire dialect, using language that evokes appropriative or colonialist use, but *Garden's* speechways are in fact multidirectional. Dickon, despite his association with vernacular, occasionally speaks in sentences rendered without dialect. "You can lose a friend in springtime easier than any other season if you're too curious," he informs Mary, and later, about a visiting robin, "Look at him perched on that branch wonderin' where it'd be best to put that twig he's got in his beak" (140, 143). Martha, when compelled, alters the phrase "nowt o' the soart" to "nothing of the sort," proving a fluidity that she chooses not to exercise elsewhere in the novel (55). Mrs. Medlock, the first to introduce Yorkshire dialect in the novel through the use of the word *marred*, has clearly learned standard speech in order to ascend through domestic ranks. Even Colin's unnamed nurse, clearly local due to the mention of her nearby sister, adopts hegemonic English dialect when communicating with Mary, Mrs. Medlock, and other members of the household. Mary and Colin talk Yorkshire to achieve their emotional and physical ideals. Mrs. Medlock and Colin's nurse talk standard in order to achieve their economic goals, and when Mrs. Medlock code-switches abruptly into Yorkshire speech to communicate with the station master, it is a startling reminder that "dialect" is entirely a matter of perspective, that standard speech is a form of dialect, too. *Marred* is translated for implied child readers, yes, but so are unfamiliar words found in non-dialect dictionaries:

“If you have to fly about to find every meal you eat, your muscles do not become atrophied (atrophied means wasted away through want of use)” (228). Learning dialect is learning language is learning dialect. As in “Esmeralda,” Burnett subtly shifts our understandings of difference so that we understand the familiarity of the foreign, the foreignness of the familiar. And as in “Seth,” Burnett productively fails to subsume one form of difference into the other, one form of speech into another kind of dialect. Ruth Y. Jenkins writes of *Garden*’s dialect that “Burnett . . . is blurring the boundaries between [cultural models] . . . dismantling the binary oppositions and offering a noncompetitive, companion image in their stead” (435). U.S. regionalism and dialect literature gives Burnett the tools to make her text rooted in the specificity of localisms, while staying alive to the possibilities of oscillating perspective.

Throughout Burnett’s oeuvre, dialect produces not only place but emotional intimacy. The language of a close space creates closeness. “Does tha’ like me?” a nervous Mary asks Dickon, and the narrator notes “she tried to ask it in Yorkshire because that was his language . . . in India a native was always pleased if you knew his speech” (97). The colonial overtones in this aside are unavoidable—Mary appropriates Yorkshire dialect in the way she apparently appropriated the local tongue in India—but Mary (and Burnett) clearly associates the use of dialect with feeling: liking, pleasure. For Mary, talking Yorkshire and talking “India”—framed in *Garden* as another locality rather than a nation—are vehicles through which to obtain good feeling, connection, and emotional proximity, alternatives to a masculinist-realist literature alienated from home and community. Fetterley and Pryse note that late nineteenth-century U.S. regionalism privileges the production of empathy for self and others, celebrating human connection in

an attempt to manufacture closeness: an “emotional tutorial” that “insistently models empathic attunement . . . provid[ing] readers with a vision of an alternative to disconnection and of the value to be derived from such an alternative” (354). Everywhere in *Garden*, dialect evokes place and empathic emotion in ways that harmonize with the literature Fetterley and Pryse examine. The power of feeling connects persons with others and with their immediate environments; Mary and Colin, once friendless and without power, have now formed important, satisfying relationships inseparable from the locale in which they take place. Martha’s “queer Yorkshire speech” has “a good effect” on Mary, who finds not only her words but the way she says them comforting. Mary uses Yorkshire speech to tell Dickon she wants to bring Colin to the garden, and an amused Dickon approves. “Tha' mun talk a bit o' Yorkshire like that to Mester Colin,” he informs her. “Tha'll make him laugh an' there's nowt as good for ill folk as laughin' is” (161). Dialect manufactures an emotional experience that roots the power of sentiment in a specific local place, and dialect is the visible, audible yoke that harnesses emotional power. As in Burnett’s childhood and adolescence, the use of dialect ensures both kinship and a kind of control, enabling Mary, Colin, and Dickon to produce an environment that best suits their needs and their pleasures. “Does tha’ think,” Colin asks Mary and Dickon of the beautiful afternoon manifesting itself inside the walls of the hidden garden, “as happen it was made loike this 'ere all o' purpose for me?” (187). This question would seem to reflect a masculinist, hierarchical sensibility that regional literature seeks to avoid, but Colin’s question stems less from a sense of entitlement and more from a grateful sense of wonder and delight. For the first time, “the whole world seemed to devote itself to being perfect and radiantly beautiful and kind to one boy,” and Yorkshire

is the language through which Colin questions the powerful intimacy of beauty and compassion now entering his life. In some ways, “does tha’ think . . . it was made loike this ‘ere all ‘o purpose for me?” is twinned with Mary’s earlier question, “Does tha’ like me?” Through the language of region, Colin learns that he is capable of receiving love and affection.

Despite the presence of the garden at its center—a space supremely English—*The Secret Garden* performs the oscillating work of U.S. regional fictions rather than the insularities of British provincialism. This negotiation does not make *Garden* an American text, but rather a translocal one, a “mutating multiplicity” that performs locality within a globally constituted network. Reading Yorkshire in *The Secret Garden* as a stand-in for the actual embodied region of Yorkshire within England disregards the extent to which “Yorkshire” is a constructed space, an amalgam of Burnett’s experiences, her fictions, and other fictions mediated across national borders through localized language and behavior. *Garden*’s translocalism matters because it reimagines the way we conceptualize this novel’s geographies, and our perceptions of place in children’s literature as a heterogeneous genre. The garden and the home are significant constructs for *Garden* and for other children’s novels, as scholars from Mavis Reimer to Janet Grafton to Claudia Mills have demonstrated, but the sociospatial lenses of locality and translocality allow us to view *Garden* at small and large scales concurrently, and to understand that this novel participates in framing the geographies of childhood in substantively complex ways. Child experience and children’s fiction are the product of both local and global pathways. Much like nineteenth-century U.S. regional writing, *The Secret Garden* achieves its goals of intimacy and sentiment through the manufacturing of an imagined, amalgamed local

space, and that local space is only made possible through the incorporation of other localized constructs, including Burnett's experiences, Burnett's fiction, *Wuthering Heights*, and even India, that country portrayed through a lens that only allows for Mary's local experiences. Like space in *The Secret Garden*, childhood is also a region, a heterogeneous locality constructed from an unresolved amalgam of experience and of fiction, experienced and practiced in embodied ways and at the same time implicating other spaces and other regions in a quiet, steady dialogue. If, as Neil Campbell argues, we must revise our conception of region as process rather than cluster, emphasizing the immediacy of encounters over positions, then *The Secret Garden* shows that even an ostensibly "conservative" novel about gardens and the mastery of privileged children can guard aggressively against interior-minded provincialism, instead embracing the interwoven complexity of translocal networks.

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Chapter 3:

A Pioneer and an American: *Little House on the Prairie*, *Caddie Woodlawn*,

Regionalism, and Nationalism

“Strange how the old timers would all like to go back to these old hard times. They had something that seems to be lost.”

Laura Ingalls Wilder in a letter to Rose Wilder Lane

“You take *Little House on the Prairie*; I’ll take *Caddie Woodlawn*,” declares a book jacket blurb on the 2006 paperback edition of Carol Ryrie Brink’s Newbery Award winning novel. As this faintly defensive note of praise implies, there are numerous parallels between *Caddie* and the best-known book in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s famous *Little House* series. Published in 1935, set in the 1860s, both semi-biographical, *Prairie* and *Caddie* center on the adventures of two high-spirited girls who live with their white settler families on Midwestern homesteads. Laura and Caddie shun traditional gendered and behavioral expectations and are fascinated by the local Native American population. Their fathers are nurturing, warm men with whom they have close relationships; their mothers are emotionally distant and often punishing, with strict standards for appropriate behavior. Although *Caddie*, not *Prairie*, won the 1936 Newbery Award, the former nevertheless remains consistently in *Prairie*’s shadow. Even in praise, *Caddie* cannot escape comparisons with *Prairie*. Nor should she: the novels have a symbiotic relationship. The selection of *Caddie* over *Prairie* or *Prairie* over *Caddie*, as the rhetorical structure of *Caddie*’s blurb infers, is a matter of personal taste, of stylistic preference, and of political ideology. These books have vastly different approaches to

their common subject material. Despite the overwhelming number of parallels between the two novels, their differences, not their similarities, are what makes reading them in tandem essential.

In this chapter, I argue that *Little House on the Prairie* and *Caddie Woodlawn* are two parts of an indivisible whole. Bringing them into conversation with one another allows us to understand how their publication and popularity, at the apex of the Great Depression, reflect opposing sides of a national conversation around cohesion, separation, and crisis.¹ Both novels respond to the historical moment of the 1930s through their foregrounding of local place and space, suggesting that characters' engagement with their immediate environments shapes the way they contribute to a broader political and social discourse. Where these books primarily differ, however, is in how they conceive of the processes that construct local place and space. While *Little House on the Prairie* emphasizes the efforts of the isolated individual, arguing that the production of regional, homelike "snugness" the novel values so highly comes primarily from the efforts of Charles Ingalls, *Caddie Woodlawn* reads the local as shaped through collaboration, cooperation, and social exchange. Their politics could not be more diametrically opposed. *Prairie's* worldview is in large part a product of Rose Wilder Lane's anti-statist, libertarian beliefs, while *Caddie* reinforces at every turn the spirit of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1932 address to the Democratic National Convention: "[T]his Nation is not merely a Nation of independence, but . . . if we are to survive, bound to be a Nation of interdependence—town and city, and North and South, East and

¹ In turning away from a translocal lens to focus on the relationship between region and nation, I in no way am arguing that the latter is more important to regional children's literature than the former, but that it constitutes another, equally significant geographic battleground for tensions between local and external interests.

West.” Despite these disparate approaches, both novels implicitly and explicitly argue for the significance of region to the development of child characters’ agency. Laura and Caddie learn how to be citizens, to participate in social discourse, through their interactions with their regional surroundings.

As I have previously established, literary regionalism is defined not only by its attention to landscape, regional customs and peculiarities, but by the tensions produced between spatial and social poles: stranger and native, belonging and exclusion, anti-hegemonic and hegemonic, local and national. Although both *Prairie* and *Caddie* contend with all of these extremes, the latter binary is particularly central to these novels, and it is on that tension that I primarily focus in the following pages. *Caddie’s* nationalism is fairly straightforward, arguing for a politics of unity across all spectrums that simultaneously resonates in the crisis moment of its publication and the crisis moment of its setting, the 1860s. Although *Prairie* insists on the value of a locally-based individualism, the text nevertheless acknowledges reluctantly that the Ingalls family has benefited substantially from the U. S. government’s allocation of land to white settlers. Importantly, this indirect emphasis on the nation does not make these texts less regional. Rather, it perpetuates a regionalist tradition of a breakdown in categorical distinctions, acknowledging that local literature can and does operate within a paradigm of multiplicity, of shifting perspectives and desires. Reading *Caddie* and *Prairie* as regionalism helps us to understand not only the political and spatial intricacies of these works, but also their literary qualities. The scaffolding of these books mirrors the careful building of the Ingalls family’s cabin in the wilderness, and the painstaking conversations

between Caddie and her father. These are texts that privilege the construction of a powerful closeness, built log by log, word by word.

Often, canonical regionalist fiction operates within a theoretical space constructed by the tension between the genre's reinforcement of nationalist ideologies and its margin-centered critique of these same politics. Nevertheless, over the past twenty years scholarship has generally favored binaried readings, disagreeing over whether regionalism primarily reinforces the nation-state or destabilizes it. Amy Kaplan argues the former, contending that regionalism participates in the construction of national hegemonies through providing a space for a "national agenda of reunion" that creates a context for American imperialism. Regionalism, Kaplan suggests, "performs a kind of literary tourism in a period that saw the tourist abroad and at home as a growing middle-class phenomenon . . . [R]egionalists invent places as allegories of desire generated by urban centers" (251-52). In short, regionalism naturalizes empire through the creation of a context within which domination and appropriation are eminently desirable. Richard Brodhead builds upon Kaplan's touristic claims, claiming that regional fiction was, for its upper-middle class white urban readers, "the prose of vacation travel . . . ministered especially effectively to the imagination of acquisition" (131-33). In their reframing of regionalist women's writing, *Writing out of Place*, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse roundly critique Kaplan and Brodhead's readings, arguing that regionalism functions primarily as anti-hegemonic discourse. Regionalism, they claim, is writing located out of the center and on the margins that counteracts traditional notions of literary plot and structure, as well as hegemonies of American masculinist-realist writing. More recently, acknowledging these hegemonic and anti-hegemonic readings, Tom Lutz argues that

neither approach alone adequately grasps regionalism's intricacies. Its fascinating complexity is in its simultaneous reflection of anti-hegemonic and hegemonic desires, the local and the national, in "a careful balancing of different groups' perspectives" that leads to "a dynamic of alternating cultural visions structuring a reading that exceeds them" (30-31). Regionalism is contradictory; regionalism can dismantle geographic and discursive borders while encouraging appropriation, nostalgia, and insularity. Its characters can challenge the state while benefiting from the privileges of citizenry. Like Whitman's speaker, regionalism is large; it contains multitudes. While the political ideologies of *Prairie* and *Caddie* differ violently, both novels perform this Lutzian oscillation and negotiation. They contribute to a nationalist project through reframing the local as coveted and critical to the construction of the United States, and to the formation of children as engaged, agential citizens.

"Now We're All Snug!": *Little House on the Prairie*

The 1953 edition of *Little House on the Prairie* begins before its first sentence. Garth Williams's memorable cover locates the book in its shifting place, space and time, effectively capturing the novel's intricate axes of movement. In his illustration, Laura and Mary Ingalls sit in the back of their family's covered wagon, looking back at viewers in a direction that implies profound nostalgia. While the wagon moves forward, advancing on the prairie, Laura and Mary stare behind. Place and space, as this art implies, are essential elements of the Little House series. We cannot imagine the Ingalls family without immediately sketching in their surrounding environment: the "endless flat land covered with tall grass blowing in the wind," the "enormous sky and the winds," the house of the

title, with its “new floor golden in the flickering firelight” (Wilder 13, 75, 131). What Williams’s cover for this edition of *Prairie* signals is the text’s interest in something beyond place and space alone. It announces the importance of time, and the paradox of movement forward and backward, into and out of regions, into and out of history.

These multifaceted concerns mark the literature of American regionalism: writing that engages with local place, space, and time. Although Diane Quantic has labeled Laura Ingalls Wilder a Great Plains writer in the tradition of Willa Cather and Mari Sandoz, the *Little House* books have not been studied within the specific context of the U.S. literary regionalist movement. Neither scholarship nor marketing has historically categorized *Prairie* as regionalism, despite intriguing and significant thematic overlaps between this work and Great Plains regional writers like Hamlin Garland, Mari Sandoz, Ole Rølvaag, and Willa Cather. Nevertheless, Wilder and Rose Wilder Lane’s novel arouses the sensory experience of the Kansas plains through precise and elaborate detail.² Their writing plays with the contrasts of Great Plains regionalism, foregrounding the isolated local, the immediately accessible, within the context of the impossibly large: the “little log house and the little stable [sitting] lonely in the stillness” (325). While regionalism asks what it means to be of a certain local place, that locality often functions simultaneously as an implicit question about nationalism. *Prairie*, despite Wilder and Lane’s overt rejection of the hegemonic state and privileging of individualism, indirectly contributes to a nationalist project by creating a nostalgic regional space, where the existence of the longed-for homespace is possible only through imperialist appropriation.

² I credit both Laura Ingalls Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane with authorship of *Prairie*, rather than Wilder alone. The great extent to which Lane contributed to her mother’s novels, through revisions, suggestions, and insertions, necessitates acknowledgement of the influence she had on *Prairie*’s writing. See Fellman, Romines, and Miller.

The pioneer local, in this text, largely supports rather than destabilizes state mythologies. Viewing *Prairie* through a regionalist lens therefore allows us to understand the crucial roles local place and space play in constructing a lexicon of nostalgic desire.³

Prairie also functions as a surrogate historical text, designed to generate nostalgia in Wilder and Lane's readers for the American frontier. Nostalgia is a significant facet of regionalist writing, and Amy Kaplan and Richard Brodhead, among others, have claimed that nineteenth century regionalism participates in a fetishizing of rural others designed to appeal to urban readers nostalgic for an imagined bucolic past. Regionalism, Kaplan and Brodhead suggest, produces tourism for a literary market that reinforces hegemonic state ideologies through its manufacture of longing. However, I argue that writing primarily in the tradition of Great Plains literature—a regionalism that departs in important ways from New England and Southern vacation regionalism—allows Wilder and Lane to reframe implied readers' nostalgic journeys outside this practice of tourism. Instead, they ground the deep nostalgia of *Prairie* in an aesthetics of homemaking that effectively bridges the deep gap between the time of its publication and the time of its setting. The journey of *Prairie* is a journey back to a homespace, not a vacation space. Time travel across the steep span between 1935 and 1869 becomes possible through Wilder and Lane's reframing of the settler colonial region as home, as snug, as emotionally familiar and familial, rather than as an othered site of visitation. This nostalgia manifests itself not

³ I focus in this chapter on *Prairie* to the exclusion of Wilder and Lane's other books not because it is the only one that fulfills the criteria of regionalism, but because I believe it fulfills these criteria in somewhat more complex and interesting ways than the other works in the *Little House* series. *Prairie*'s nostalgic homebuilding, and its interest in negotiating between categories of "strange" Native populations and "native" white settlers, among others, are direct engagements with major regionalist tropes of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

only through the fact of *Prairie*'s historical context, but through a specific lexicon of looking back: a language that highlights the small, the accessible, and the everyday local.

Despite its valorizing of settler colonialism, *Prairie*'s politics are not wholly or unquestionably nationalist. To make that claim is to ignore Wilder and Lane's loud rejection of state influence. The book's nationalism is complicated by its libertarian politics, which continually reinforce the supremacy of minimal government. The friction in *Prairie* between national and local is located primarily in the tension between its valuing of nineteenth-century imperialism and rejection of twentieth-century nationalist politics, in favor of locally-situated individualism. Although *Prairie* openly advocates imperialist ideologies, the text's emphasis on self-reliance, born out of early libertarian ideologies, complicates a reading of the book as unquestionably nationalist. There exists a clear relationship between the individual white settler colonialist's desire for land and the government's overwhelming support of white settler colonialism through policies such as the 1862 Homestead Act. The simultaneous embracing of empire and rejection of government intrusion fulfills one of literary regionalism's defining characteristics: the straddling of literal and ideological borders.

Wilder and Lane's libertarianism plays a major role in shaping the politics of the *Little House* series. Lane, in particular, was deeply committed to laissez-faire principles, and believed in the efficacy of extremely limited government. In the ten years before *Prairie*'s publication, her politics crossed the political spectrum, from far left to far right. In the 1920s, she professed disillusionment with what she called the "hypocritical" American spirit, with its "insularity, its standardization, its complacency, its ignorance," advocating the benefits of socialism (Miller 192). By the early 1930s, however, Lane

argued that America's greatest asset was its individual citizen. One of her more well-known works, *Give Me Liberty*, published just a year after *Prairie*, actively decries Rooseveltian policies and calls for minimal state intervention. The settling of the United States, she argues, was made possible not by the government's permission, but by the pioneering spirit:

There was no plan that these young United States should ever cover half this continent. The thought of New York and Washington lagged far behind that surge. It was the released energies of individuals that poured westward at a speed never imagined, sweeping away and overwhelming settlements of more cohesive peoples and reaching the Pacific in the time that Jefferson thought it would take to settle Ohio. (Lane 31)

Manifest destiny, for Lane, is the result of individualism rather than state interest.

Although it is clear Lane did not view the United States as an empire, the tension here between individualist appropriation and nationalism is palpable. Lane's writing resonates with these strains, of which she demonstrates no overt awareness. Similarly, in her reflection on one of her books, entitled *Free Land*, Lane points out the irony of the title, meant to reflect that "there never was any . . . really 'free' land." Lane, of course, refers here to the financial costs of homesteading to homesteaders, acknowledging these expenses to make her point about the inadequacies of government. She makes no reference to the theft of Native lands by white settlers, nor to the benefits of successful homesteading for the state. The government, for Lane, is a drain on pioneering efforts. In her writing, she does not acknowledge that government policies primarily produced rather than hindered possibilities for expansionism.

Prairie speaks to Wilder and Lane's disenchantment with New Deal policies: what Lane viewed as massive and unwarranted governmental interference. The book's

narrator positions the Ingalls' actions as unconnected to the state, and explicitly distances Pa, in particular, from it. Throughout the first chapter, Wilder and Lane repeatedly emphasize the isolation of the Ingalls family through absence and negation: "In the West the land was level, and there were no trees . . . there the wild animals wandered and fed as though they were in a pasture that stretched much farther than a man could see, and there were no settlers" (2).⁴ While Laura occasionally feels uncomfortable with this distance, the geographic isolation benefits the Ingalls family. Ma explains to Laura that "Pa had word from a man in Washington that the Indian Territory would be open to settlement soon. [Kansas] might already be open to settlement. They could not know, because Washington was so far away" (47). Distance, Ma and the narrator imply, implicitly absolves the Ingalls family from legalities. The farther they are from the seat of national government, the less complicated questions around local land ownership become. Washington is far away not only geographically, but ideologically. Its concerns about borders and boundaries are not ones to which the Ingalls family, concerned with the challenges of survival and sustenance, are sympathetic. The local, for them, far outweighs the national.

Despite this anathema towards national government, Wilder and Lane seem also to recognize the extent to which Washington has made white settler colonialism possible. References to the U. S. government also appear in a short, tense conversation between Laura, Pa and Ma, when Laura asks why the Osage tribe has to leave their land and go west. "The government makes them, Laura," Pa tells her. "The government is going to

⁴ In the 1935 edition of *Prairie*, the line read "and there were no people." Harper altered the text for subsequent editions (Marcus 53-54).

move these Indians farther west, any time now. That's why we're here, Laura. White people are going to settle all this country, and we get the best land because we get here first and take our pick" (236-37). Laura is somewhat distressed by this; not for the rights of the Osage, but for her own safety. "Won't it make the Indians mad to – ?" she asks, and Pa cuts her off, telling her sharply that it's time for bed. This passage resurrects that familiar tension in Wilder and Lane's writing between their interest in limited government and the fact of the Ingalls family benefiting from government intrusion. That the word "government" appears so explicitly as an actor in this passage—an actor responsible for something the text views positively—suggests that the text acknowledges a complex, kinetic relationship between empire and the individualist ideals Wilder and Lane advocate. The U. S. government's nationalist policies of "mov[ing] these Indians farther west," is what makes the Ingalls' local homesteading possible. In this passage, *Prairie* acknowledges that relationship, troubling a reading of the text as exclusively uncritical or overly simplifying its own politics. Fulfilling Lutz's "contrapuntal, unresolved, Bakhtinian" oscillation of differing voices, desires and positions, *Prairie* both vehemently critiques nationalism and simultaneously acknowledges that nationalist policies make its narrative possible.

This willingness to disturb and negotiate multiple perspectives manifests itself not only in explicit conversations around nationalism, but in *Prairie*'s uneasy relationship with physical manifestations of place and space. Great Plains regional literature often emphasizes the unreliability of environment and its predilection towards violence and refusal. Willa Cather describes the Nebraska plains as "an enigma . . . like a horse that no one knows how to break to harness, that runs wild and kick things to pieces" (17). For

Hamlin Garland, who often wrote from the perspective of Midwestern homesteaders, the land takes as easily as it gives, and even in its moments of beauty is not to be trusted.⁵ Mari Sandoz, writing in the late 1920s of her family's Nebraska homesteading experience forty years earlier, describes the land with similar disquiet, giving it an ever-increasing strength of its own: "Every day the wind's song was louder, the air drier, the sun glare brighter on the sandy stretches" (16). The characters of Ole Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth* are dismayed by the merciless stretch of the prairie: "How will human beings be able to endure this place? [Beret] thought. Why, there isn't even a thing that one can *hide behind!*" (33). Like regionalism itself, the Great Plains presents a fundamental contradiction: the vastness of seemingly "empty" space coupled with the weight of presence, both human and natural. "On the Great Plains," Diane Quantic writes, ". . . [f]or some the land symbolizes unlimited opportunity. Others feel the threat of isolation in a land where they can find nothing to look at" (2). Pa's enthusiasm for "a country where the wild animals lived without being afraid" jostles against Laura's anxieties: "All around the wagon there was nothing but empty and silent space. Laura didn't like it" (2, 7). The settler is unsettled. What, precisely, unsettles her Laura does not or cannot articulate in these early moments. She is comforted by the familiar sight of a log house set back in the distance, the wide, unnerving expanse of prairie happily interrupted by a reassuring sign of white settlers' presence. The construction of a homestead, readers learn, provides important psychological as well as physical relief from the strains and threats of Great Plains life.

⁵ In his recent biography of Garland, Keith Newlin links his subject and Wilder, noting that "today, Garland is still celebrated, along with Laura Ingalls Wilder and Willa Cather, for the clarity with which his work illustrates prairie life . . . [and] the realistic delineation of its landscape" (4).

Little House on the Prairie fits comfortably within a chronology of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Great Plains literature that includes the writings of Garland, Cather, Sandoz, and Rølvaag, among others. Through their uncompromising focus on the hardships of nineteenth-century prairie life, these works depart from a major defining characteristic of the older New England and Southern regionalisms, rejecting a romantic essentializing of region as inherently bucolic. The Eastern tourist model as favored by Kaplan and Brodhead, therefore, inevitably wrinkles in protest at any attempt to superimpose it on the harsh prairies of the Great Plains. This is not the prose of vacation travel. Rather than write a touristic regionalism that emphasizes visitation and otherness, Wilder and Lane instead write in the tradition of Hamlin Garland, fashioning a prose of home-longing, homebuilding and homecoming. While we may think of the prairie region in Great Plains fiction as a Sandozian space of endless misery and toil that disqualifies it as a locus for nostalgic desire, Garland's work sets an important precedent for Wilder and Lane's desirable frontier homespace. John Funchion notes that homesickness is a "universal condition" for Garland's characters, who often long not for the old country, or the East, but for their rural homesteads. Importantly, this desire for home is restorative rather than sickly, an attempt at "re-enlist[ing] a sentimental aesthetics . . . to emphasize mutual interests and shared histories" ("Putting the Past Out to Pasture" 182). Wilder and Lane make similar use of accommodating language. They carefully fashion the Ingalls family homestead into an inclusive space, through their employment of an aesthetics of homemaking that reframes *Prairie* as shared space for readers and characters alike.⁶

⁶ There are significant limits to the reach of this inclusive language. Readers who do not identify with the experiences or social privileges of Laura and her family may feel rejected from Wilder and Lane's "shared

However, this reframing demands a kind of time travel. Wilder and Lane are writing regionalism across the span of an entire human lifetime, and, more specifically, for an implied child audience for whom youth makes that prodigious distance even greater. A chronology of Great Plains fiction in the early twentieth century shows that as the decades progress, its writers look back at the nineteenth century over increasingly large temporal gaps: Cather, thirty to forty years, Rølvaag, forty-five years, Sandoz, forty-five to fifty years. Although Wilder and Lane's gap of sixty-five years is by far the largest of the group, in some important ways that time span—the “sixty years since” that Walter Scott establishes as the marker of historical fiction—is just broad enough to be democratizing, as neither the children or parents of 1935 will remember 1869-71. If the nineteenth century regionalism of New England and the South is a literary vacation for the elite urban consumer, as Brodhead argues, *Prairie's* regionalism is an inclusive homecoming, made paradoxically possible by the wide span of years that levels the playing field of textual participation, and effectively equalizes opportunities for access. This gap provides readers, regardless of class or location, with the same linguistic portal: “A long time ago.” Wilder and Lane accomplish this difficult journey back through three remarkable opening sentences that fashion a rhetorical bridge between the present of 1935 to the Ingalls family in 1869. Despite the chapter heading—“Going West”—*Prairie* moves in another direction entirely, drawing readers back with dizzying rapidity into the time of the story:

A long time ago, when all the grandfathers and grandmothers of today were little boys and little girls or very small babies, or perhaps not even

history.” Certainly there are many references in the books that effectively exclude certain readers from the Ingalls family homespace, particularly Native American readers (Fellman 131-32).

born, Pa and Ma and Mary and Laura and Baby Carrie left their little house in the Big Woods of Wisconsin. They drove away and left it lonely and empty in the clearing among the big trees, and they never saw that little house again.

They were going to the Indian country. (1)

“A long time ago” is a well-known, centuries-old, storytelling stock phrase. Wilder and Lane’s young readers, brought up with Andrew Lang’s Fairy Books and other similar oral tales, would almost certainly recognize and respond to it. While in some ways, the phrase marks the time of *Prairie* as other to the moment of its publication, it is also an incantation that summons profound familiarity. Through this invocation, delivered in a language most child readers know fluently, distant time therefore becomes accessible in a way that a specific year (“In 1869”) cannot be. For readers familiar with the first book in the *Little House* series, *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932), these opening words carry with them the shadow text of *Big Woods*’s final sentences: “[The Ingalls family] could not be forgotten, [Laura] thought, because now is now. It can never be a long time ago” (238). Through this oscillation between temporal poles, Wilder and Lane resurrect dead years, erasing for readers the foreignness and otherness that typically defines the past. They reject the impossibility of its distance. To paraphrase William Faulkner, “a long time ago” isn’t dead; it’s not even a long time ago.

The genealogy that follows builds on this accessibility by establishing an ancestral chain that connects the present to this familiar past. This “long time ago” is not exotic, but a space inhabited by many 1930s grandparents. The familial link implies the personal, and the references are generic enough (“or very small babies, or perhaps not even born”) to allow readers to fit their own family histories inside this chronology. Having established this past as ancestral, Wilder and Lane lead readers directly to the

catalyst for the events of the novel: the Ingalls family leave an earlier little house to go “to the Indian country.” While these second and third sentences include distressing descriptions (“lonely and empty”), and the introduction of unknown, possibly threatening territory, the title of the book and the presence of Pa, Ma, Mary, Laura, and Baby Carrie—all explicitly introduced to readers—are there to offer reassurance. The first little house may be gone, but the Ingallses will build another one. In just three sentences, Wilder and Lane manage with astonishing skill to rapidly reorient child readers’ perspectives across a span of six and a half decades so that the Ingallses become familiar and familial. The home the family builds is not only for them, but for readers as well.

The home exceeds its essential definition of four walls and a roof. A process of social constructions and exchanges as well as one of manual labor, homes are “a product of human shaping and sharing” fashioned through people’s “shared commitments to ideas, practices, and values” (Reimer 1). These commitments are spatially oriented ones, enacted through building visible and invisible walls. Inevitably, “the home is built [around] a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference” (George 2). Literary regionalism’s significant interest in the unstable categories of “stranger” and “native” rhymes with the inclusion/exclusion pattern Rosemary George identifies, suggesting that the process of constructing region may be closely tied to the process of homebuilding. Stephanie Foote notes that regionalism’s interest in “strange” places defies the fantasy of a single holistic national identity, while positioning the visitor to the region as concurrently “strange” to the region and “native” to the reader, troubling easy perspectives. Like other binaries, the terms “stranger” and “native” are troubled in regionalism: “[A]t the core of every representation of the native

[is] a foreigner” (13). *Prairie*’s primary conflict is that between stranger and native, and, more implicitly, in the text’s refusal to ever wholly fix who earns which label. The Ingalls family marks their regional arrival through the construction of a home on Osage land. However, what Wilder and Lane construct as strange and what they construct as familiar problematize the superficial labeling of the Ingalls family as foreign or strange to the region. While the Osage they encounter are unquestionably native to the territory, Wilder and Lane’s narrative and Laura’s observations continually present them as foreign, foregrounding difference rather than similarity. The descriptions of Osage men are dehumanizing and condescending, suggesting that they revel in the stink of animal carcasses, and are unaware of appropriate skinning techniques (Reese). Conversely, Wilder and Lane emphasize the extent to which the Ingalls, despite their recent arrival in Kansas, should be understood as native, through the ways they adapt to the harsh land. *Prairie*’s primary narrative focus is on the process of making the strange familiar, advancing the process of belonging, of making home. It achieves this through considerable detail, focusing primarily on details that conjure a strong sense of place.

One of the hallmarks of *Prairie* is the careful detail with which Wilder and Lane render the craft of the building process. They devote, for example, an entire chapter to Pa’s painstaking building of two doors. This creates, at first glance, the sense of an instruction manual: “He fastened [the hinges] first to the door, in this way: He laid a little piece of wood on the door, and bored a hole through it into the door. Then he doubled one end of a strap around the little piece of wood . . .” (101). The government has “opened” Kansas territory for the Ingalls and other settlers; Pa, conversely, is a door-builder, one who closes, one who makes the land manageable and consumable. The man

whose desire to live on land with “no settlers” drives him to continually uproot his wife and daughters is also a man for whom pioneering is a process of increased minimization. Pa is only satisfied with an impenetrable door: “It was a good oak door, solid and strong . . . Nobody could break in without breaking the strong latch in two . . . It was a good door” (103-05). A good door, as this passage makes clear, is not only a door that keeps out the elements, but a door that keeps out unwanted persons. It creates a contrasting space through its primary function: “[I]f you were inside and wanted to keep anyone out, then you pulled the latch string in through its hole and nobody could get in” (105). If *Prairie* is a book about locating and constructing a homelike, cozy space in response to the presence and pressure of outside persons and elements, then this chapter offers a subtle climax to that narrative. “Now we’re all snug!” Pa announces, triumphantly, the work of one hundred pages culminating not only in protection from the elements, but in a reassuring closeness (106). The pleasures of this climactic moment lie in its emotional ones as much as in its tangible ones. The Ingalls family is now “snug”: a short but powerful word that holds within its four letters the happy promise of intimacy. For Pa, to be snug is a position that stands in inexplicable contrast to his oft-stated, propelling desire to move westward, an all-consuming need that catalyzes the story and seems to drive the text. And yet, despite this expressed need, the labor of *Prairie* is not movement outward but movement inward. The labor of *Prairie* is the construction of snugness, the building of tight walls and solid doors and sturdy floors that push back against the world. We are *all* snug, Pa proclaims, and that *all* includes *Prairie*’s readers, whom Wilder and Lane

have invited into this close, warm space by slowly, carefully, and explicitly instructing them in the specialized minutia of craft.⁷

This house is a remarkable achievement, but it is not Pa alone who produces the homespace. In arguing that the *Little House* series contains many hallmarks of Great Plains literature, including “the mix of storms, economic uncertainty and illnesses that conspire to keep the family on the margins of economic stability, and the equally strong determination of the family to endure hardship,” Diane Quantic focuses on “Ma’s shepherdess and corner shelf” as signifiers of stability in a context of relative chaos and movement (224). The familiarity of these household objects helps to verify the Ingalls family’s sense of belonging, indirectly contrasted against the Osage with whom they share the region. “There,” Ma says, once the house is completed, having placed the doll on the shelf and spread a tablecloth over the table. “Now we’re living like civilized folks again” (129). The next sentence is a literal reinforcement of Ma’s declaration: “After that Pa filled the cracks in the walls” (ibid). Ma is also filling cracks in walls. The placement of these objects is domesticity as defense, as failsafe injection into the bulwarks of homebuilding in the wild. The separation between “stranger” and “native” is clearer, thanks to the shelf, doll and tablecloth. Now “civilized,” the Ingalls family is firmly ensconced not only upon the land but in their home, and there is less danger of slippage between these indistinct categories. The building of the Ingalls homestead, the process of

⁷ This level of detail also serves a more explicitly political purpose: as an extended reminder of Pa’s Thoreau-like self-reliance. The text emphasizes through almost painful itemization what the knowledge and will of one man can produce: “I’ll not keep on waiting till I can make a trip to Independence. A man doesn’t need nails to build a house or make a door” (100). A man does not need nails to build a door, and a man does not need a national government to construct a snug home. Pa does not need to go to Independence. He is already there.

settlement and appropriation, is also a process of negotiation that eventually resolves who belongs in the home and who does not. Through this social and physical construction, accomplished without any visible help from state agencies, Wilder and Lane encourage their child readers to long for a regional past defined by what they viewed as political and economic freedom, a past also implicitly nationalist with deep roots in colonialist theft and appropriation. They make this past desirable by locating their ideological agenda within the construction of an attractive, familiar, close homespace, in which getting and having become the inevitable results of longing.

Nostalgia is ultimately the defining process by which *Prairie* breeds its familiarity and familiarity, enabling the book to cross a gulf of decades between its publication and its setting through its creation of an inviting, recognizable home. Memory's unloved relative, nostalgia, for many scholars, is a hedonistic fetishizing of the past, "a form of unreflective self-indulgence" that refuses critical engagement (Fleissner 315). Nostalgia encourages constant, continual retreat into a golden history: a past that is always present and always lost. It is not, however, antithetical to critical engagement. Like memory, nostalgia also produces possibilities for acknowledging how loss and desire, imagined or real, can be slippery constructs. The productive complexity of nostalgia is in the way it both understands the impossibility of turning back time *and* the way it defies that impossibility, mourning for a lost space while attempting to resurrect and recapture it. Although the concept of nostalgia has, over the last century, become synonymous with a mourning for something once experienced and now gone, its original definition hews much closer to the idea of homesickness. Nostalgia originates from a combination of the Greek words *nostos*, or "return to the native land," and *algos*, or pain (Matt 470).

Working from this definition, John Funchion conflates the rise of nostalgia in the United States with the rise of expansionism and colonialism, noting that it explicitly undermined “the migratory impulse to venture out into the world . . . an adverse reaction to ‘the strange and untried’” (“When Dorothy Became History” 431). Nostalgia, then, can be a reaction born out of nationalism, creating and seeking a return to a familiar home beneath the weighty construct of empire. *Prairie* performs this paradox, employing expansionism and ideologies of manifest destiny for purposes of homecoming and home building.⁸

Children’s literature can never fully escape its connection with nostalgia. As a genre written by adults attempting to capture something of an imagined child essence, it occasionally embraces this idea of retreat, particularly in ideologically conservative works that overtly reject the pursuit of the unfamiliar and propose home as the ultimate refuge. Children’s literature is less about writing for the implied child reader than it is about the production of what adults want *for* children. That process often becomes bound up in the language of return and safety. Many works of children’s fiction center around home and longing, where child characters leave the home, return to it, build a new one, or all three (Nodelman). Similarly, regionalism has a significant connection to nostalgia, identified primarily by the Kaplan-Brodhead school of criticism. Regionalism’s nostalgia, for these scholars, often appears “as a mode of ‘amnesia’ rather than actual remembrance,” a forgetting of history for the purposes of consumption rather than an engagement with it (Fleissner 331).

⁸ In conflating nostalgia with empire building in *Prairie*, I do not wish to suggest that nostalgia is inherently or universally a force for hegemony. It can and has been deployed for literary purposes that are antithetical to the major interests of the state. As Funchion has argued, some writers have transformed nostalgia “from an idle affective longing into an active mode of emplotting the past to challenge the inequities of the present moment” (“Putting the Past Out to Pasture” 175).

Amy Kaplan's claim for regionalism's national agenda of reunion rests in part on what she argues is a reimagining of the past. "Much [regionalist] fiction," she claims, "expresses a Janus-faced nostalgia in which desire generated by a modern industrial society longingly projects alternatives onto the screen of the past" (242). Wilder and Lane participate fully in this production of desire, through writing a quintessentially American nostalgia for children simultaneously presented as immediately, emotionally familiar and politically divergent from the present of its publishing. The desire *Prairie* generates, however, is not catalyzed by the "modern industrial society" Kaplan claims as the source for regional fiction's production, but from the political climate and programs of the 1930s, against which Wilder and Lane's libertarian ideologies chafed badly. Written during a point of unprecedented nationalism and big government, *Prairie* redrafts white settler mythologies for a child audience, aiming to appropriate the frontier regional space as a defining crucible for American independence. For the child reader who may not have access to competing stories about national and regional histories, however, this nostalgia is problematic, purporting itself to be objective truth, a mourning for a shared, unambiguous past, rather than as subjective narrative. As a work aimed at a child audience, *Prairie* is an introduction for its child readers into the pull of nostalgia, a desire they, as young people, are only just learning exists. The didacticism of the book is not necessarily directed towards educating child readers in appropriate behavior, but in instilling in them a sense of loss and mourning for a not-yet-familiar history that Wilder and Lane believe embodies the quintessential and ideal American spirit.

John E. Miller notes the extent to which Wilder and Lane's work plays with constructs of nostalgic time, place, and space: "[A]wareness of the past plays an

important role in the love of place. The nostalgia [their] novels stimulated in many readers involved both a sort of homesickness . . . and a bittersweet yearning for a lost time” (54). Nostalgia is inextricable from *Prairie*’s geographies, as their artwork reveals again and again. Garth Williams, whose charcoal and ink illustrations for the 1953 edition *Little House* series have become nearly as famous as the words they accompany, provocatively captures *Prairie*’s tensions between nostalgia, movement, and perspective. His cover of *Prairie* depicts Laura and Mary, sitting in the back of the Ingallses’ covered wagon, facing directly towards the child reader, while Ma and Pa remain in front. The wagon is clearly moving, as indicated by the flapping rope on the side of the canvas covering, the tilting bucket, and Jack the dog’s blurring of feet in the grass below the wagon bed. Laura stares directly out, her mouth turned slightly down, her hands folded over her arms in a gesture that seems almost self-protecting. Mary also looks out, but her eyes do not meet the viewers’, and instead are trained slightly to the left of the image. Mary and Laura looking back is thematically resonant with *Prairie*’s nostalgia. While the girls stare back at the trail across which their wagon has traveled, their position also invokes a larger historical framework that transcends the particular moment of the 1860s and 70s. Their dour faces indicate a mourning for the lost frontier that white settlers, by the 1930s, had partly occupied. Laura, in particular, interpellates child readers through her uncompromising stare, inviting them to participate in this project of mourning. Intriguingly, the child readers’ implied location—somewhere behind the Ingalls’ wagon—is also the very place where Laura and Mary look with such desire, suggesting that readers’ presence is always already implied within this nostalgic framework. Child readers, therefore, occupy a significant, privileged position. They participate in a

perpetuation of nostalgia through the act of reading, and cannot be extricated from this project of imperialist mourning for lost place.

In the act of opening the book, readers do not leave Williams's cover. On the first pages of the first chapter, the reader encounters the cover image yet again, but presented from a different perspective. The image, although in black and white, contains the same characters, in the same positions. This time, however, the reader views the wagon from a side angle, above and to the right of the wagon, not brought into the image by Laura but wholly distant from the illustration. The horizon spreads out across the span of two pages, the illustration of the trail bleeding into the text itself. This shift in perspective is somewhat dizzying, suggesting that readers' spatial relationship with the text does not necessarily parallel the inexorable direction declared by the chapter title, inserted into the image: "GOING WEST." In the distance between the cover and this first illustration, the viewing reader moves sideways, not necessarily forward, or westward. The Ingallses may be "going west," but readers remain somewhat distant from them, looking at their progression from a removed location. Through these first two illustrations, *Prairie* establishes a commitment to dislocation that the text continually reasserts, through its recurrent tension between looking back and looking forward, and through the ambiguous position child readers occupy: as both witnesses to and participants in this reproduction of longing. This dissonant positioning anticipates the Ingalls family's progression away from expansion and towards insularity, capturing the impossibility of simultaneous movement that defines regionalist literature.

These images are all the more striking in that they depart almost entirely from Helen Sewell's original cover. Sewell's illustration shares only one major similarity with

Williams's: both feature Mary and Laura. On the cover of the 1935 edition, Mary and Laura turn away from implied viewers, their faces unseen, looking toward the family's log home. Lacking the inviting soft shading and round curves that define Williams's charcoals, Sewell's art is spare, even minimalist, with simple, unicolor lines. Here, Laura and Mary's position excludes viewers from participation, their turned backs the opposite of the girls' interpellating stares in Williams's illustration. The object of focus for the drawing is not the wagon—an open structure defined in large part by its mobility and perviousness—but the little house of the title, the emblem of solid interiority, of snugness. If Sewell implies any movement at all, it is unidirectional. The image suggests the possibility that Mary and Laura, facing toward the house, may go inside. Although Sewell admittedly neglects *Prairie*'s multidirectionality, closing the text in ways that Wilder and Lane do not, she nevertheless depicts one of the book's significant movements in a way that effectively compliments Williams's illustration. While the 1953 edition shows Laura and Mary on a moving wagon looking back at viewers, Sewell hints at the nostalgic promise of a snug home more explicitly. That she trains her image on the completed house, rather than its occupants, the wagon, or the prairie itself, supports a reading of *Prairie* as a text that foregrounds longing. Like Williams's Mary and Laura, Sewell's Mary and Laura are also looking back. Rather than reject Sewell's work for unsuccessfully capturing *Prairie*'s complexity, therefore, I advocate for the importance of reading of her cover alongside Williams's. As two different illustrations of the same text, their varying interpretations create a kinectic fluctuation that fails, in productive ways, to fix *Prairie* in geographic, temporal, or emotional stasis.

Prairie's multilayered nostalgia gains a new complication when we consider its implied audience. Wilder and Lane wrote primarily for young children, readers who had and have minimal exposure to the time, place and space of nineteenth century Great Plains settlement. How, then, can a text produce nostalgia for readers who may not have yet developed the life experience or the social and historical awareness to crave looking back?⁹ How can a text make child readers homesick for a home they haven't seen? Wilder and Lane accomplish this production through creating a lexicon of intense longing often tied to familiar aesthetic objects and food. Once obtained, these items produce for Mary and Laura the powerful emotion of snugness Pa idealizes. The narrator's inclusive language invites readers to partake in Mary and Laura's act of reception and subsequent snugness, reemphasizing the extent to which they belong inside the homespace. One scene synthesizes these elements to particular effect. Family friend Mr. Edwards returns from Independence on Christmas Eve, battling storms and a high creek to deliver Mary and Laura their presents: a "shining . . . glittering new tin cup" for each, "two long sticks of candy . . . [E]ach found a little heart-shaped cake . . . and in the very toe of each stocking was a shining, bright, new penny!" (248-50). The narrator emphasizes the wonderful strangeness of these gifts: "They had never even thought of such a thing as having a penny. Think of having a whole penny for your very own. Think of having a cup and a cake and a stick of candy *and* a penny. There had never been such a Christmas"

⁹ I recognize that *Little House* readers are in no way limited to the young children to whom these books are traditionally marketed. The audience for them is comprised of readers of all ages, including those who read them as children and are, as adults, nostalgic for the experience of the books themselves. In this chapter, I am primarily concerned with how Wilder and Lane create a nostalgic experience for their intended readership. For more on the cultural reception of the *Little House* books by an audience that includes and exceeds Wilder and Lane's implied child readers, see Fellman 155-98.

(250). The penny is not the important factor here, nor is the cup, or the candy, or the cake. What matters in this scene is the level of desire produced by its proximity, and the way the narrator speaks directly to child readers, drawing them into this production of desire, making them part of the homespace fueled by longing. *Think of having*, the narrator encourages readers. *Think of having for your very own*. This is the command that implicitly runs through *Prairie* from its very first sentence, which encourages children to connect their own lived experiences to those of the Ingalls family: think of having this home for your very own. Throughout this novel, Wilder and Lane have constructed an achingly familiar homespace they encourage readers to appropriate through their careful, highly skilled manipulation of language and imagery.

Although a room of one's own is impossible on the prairie, Laura and Mary still have cakes of their own. Mary, ever virtuous, restrains herself, but Laura cannot resist a taste: "She nibbled a tiny nibble from underneath, where it wouldn't show. And the inside of the little cake was white! It had been made of pure white flour and sweetened with white sugar" (249). These cakes are decidedly superior to the ones Ma has made for Christmas dinner, "with brown sugar . . . they did not have white sugar sprinkled over their tops" (252). In a novel where whiteness inevitably trumps brownness, where the desirability of consumption is not only literal but figurative, where Laura pleads, sobbing and inarticulate with need, for Pa to get her "that little Indian baby," these moments ring loudly. *Prairie* constructs a nostalgia around possession, consumption, and appropriation. It builds a snug, close home where "having for your very own" extends not only to cups and cakes, but to little houses, and desire for the land of others, and ownership over the bodies of other children. In her extensive and insightful reading of material culture in the

Little House series, Ann Romines argues that *On the Banks of Plum Creek* heralds the beginning of “an education in consuming . . . Laura and Mary learn to read, buy, and consume, thus becoming players and participants in postbellum, industrialized, nineteenth century U. S. culture” (99). While the family engages more directly with a consumer marketplace in *Plum Creek*, that novel is not when “this process begins” (ibid). As Romines herself hints when addressing the Ingallses’ Christmas celebrations, Laura and Mary’s education in having decidedly predates the Ingalls family’s ability to purchase goods with money. The girls learn, through this bounty, the dizzying joy of personal ownership.

The intensity of Laura’s reaction to her Christmas gifts, particularly her speechlessness, is therefore inextricable from the scene of the Osage departure at the end of *Prairie*. If Laura is briefly “too happy to speak” (250), receiving her new possessions at Christmas, later, when denied the Native infant she so badly wants, she loses her voice almost entirely when attempting to articulate her need. The Ingalls family watch as the Osage tribe pass by the little house, riding off their land, and Laura delights in the procession, clapping her hands and watching carefully.¹⁰ One figure attracts her particular interest: a baby in a basket, riding on the side of a pony, “its hair . . . as black as a crow and its eyes . . . black as a night when no stars shine” (308). Laura demands that Pa “get” her “that little Indian baby!” and when Pa, astonished, tells her to “hush,” and the baby begins to pass into the distance, Laura starts to cry, quickly becoming hysterical. “Oh, I

¹⁰ Wilder and Lane give no reasons for the Osage exodus, but the tribe’s departure from Kansas was the result of nearly a decade of complicated, failed treaties and resulting legislation from the U.S. Congress in 1870 that demanded the removal of the Osage and authorized the sale of land to white settlers (Kaye).

want it! I want it!” she begs, despite Ma’s horrified admonishing, and she cannot articulate her reasoning: “‘Its eyes are so black,’ Laura sobbed. She could not say what she meant” (309).

Laura’s longing is a natural extension of the acts of appropriation to which she, as the daughter of settlers, has been witness (Smulders). To be denied “that little Indian baby” is incomprehensible for a child whose father has told her that they are entitled to others’ property simply because “we take our pick” (237). Her extreme reaction, read in this context, is understandable. Like the Christmas scene, the departure of the Osage foregrounds the power of desire to push the self beyond coherence. Unlike the Christmas scene, however, this moment showcases the height of unfulfilled desire, rather than the height of satisfaction: the pain of loss that inevitably follows moments of fulfillment, imagined or real. The dizzying anguish of losing, made all the more painful by remembering the heady joy of getting. Readers are invited to long for this historical witnessing of the Osage departure in the same way *Prairie* encourages them to think or long for the bounty of the Ingallses’ Christmas. The intensity of Laura’s desire, and her struggle for articulation, serves primarily as instruction or template for the nostalgic longing Wilder and Lane hope to incite. Laura’s mourning for what her family and other settlers have destroyed anticipates and mirrors the intense homesickness Wilder and Lane attempt to produce in their readers for a lost way of independent life. Like the penny, the cake, the cup and candy, the Native people in *Prairie* function as signifiers, things to be coveted, things that in their existence and subsequent absence create an excuse for the expression of this powerful, overwhelming desire. Laura’s mourning is, in the end, not for the removal of a population, but a nod to *Prairie*’s readers that the changed political

reality of the present—the only reality these child readers have ever known—requires grieving. At the height of the Great Depression, *think of having for your very own* is fantasy, not practicality. That this scene of mourning occurs outside the house is no accident. Both the snug homelike space of the pioneer local, and the self-determining ideologies Wilder and Lane believe make it possible, are now breached and threatened with failure. Home is a way of establishing difference; we cannot conceive of snugness without its absence, and we cannot know what it means to long without understanding the power of having. In these two scenes, we move from possession to loss, from the successful appropriation of a single Indian-head penny to the agony of looking across the land, watching “that long line of Indians slowly pull[ing] itself over the western edge of the world . . . [leaving] nothing left but silence and emptiness” (311). Again, the moment captures the conflict between perspectives that defines regionalism. Laura and her family look forward at the progression of the procession into the horizon, while the text encourages us to long for the lost little spaces, for the small things, for the homes on the wide prairie.

E Pluribus Unum: *Caddie Woodlawn*

In her introduction to *Caddie Woodlawn*, added to a 1973 paperback reprint, Carol Ryrie Brink emphasizes the book’s authenticity, partly factual but largely emotional. “Caddie Woodlawn,” she explains to her implied child readers, “was my grandmother . . . [T]he facts of the book are mainly true but have sometimes been slightly changed to make them fit better into the story” (iv). This information, however, does not receive nearly as much focus as the reaction of the “real” Caddie to the finished book.

She is puzzled by Brink's apparently astonishing skill for recapturing her long-lost childhood. "You never knew my mother and my father and my brothers," we are told she informed Brink. "How could you write about them exactly as they were?" Brink replies, "But, Gram, you told me," implying an unbroken chain of credible emotional authenticity that does not depend so much on actual fact as it does recapturing a sense of lived experience (v). Although Brink added this introduction nearly forty years after *Caddie* was first published, it serves as an effective indicator of the book's priorities, primarily its investment in structures of feeling over objective truth. The events may not have occurred exactly as written, but the Woodlawns, nevertheless, are "exactly as they were," a family whose lived experiences were defined by their attempts to build relationships between self and other. Legitimacy, for Brink, is about the generation of sentiment around longing for unification, rather than the presentation of historical fact.

Like *Prairie*, *Caddie* responds to the nationalizing thrust of the 1930s political climate by focusing on exchanges within a regional environment. The local is a microcosm, an accessible field within which young children learn discursive practices. Unlike *Prairie*, however, *Caddie* defines local place as created not through individual labor, but through collaboration, cooperation, and social interdependence. As Anita Clair Fellman writes in a brief aside in her book on Laura Ingalls Wilder and American culture: "The underlying theme of *Caddie Woodlawn* is not pioneer self-sufficiency but the democratizing impulse of American life . . . her family is well integrated into the community" (82). Whereas *Prairie* condemns interdependence, implicitly critiquing Rooseveltian big government, *Caddie* celebrates it, arguing that the process of performing "American" is at its roots a locally based practice, produced by generous

outreach to others, and cemented through intimate interactions and exchanges. *Caddie*, like *Prairie*, enacts an imagined, longed-for national past at the regional level, but in *Caddie* this past is partly defined by its efforts towards amalgamation, rather than separatism.

Although *Caddie*'s emphasis is decidedly and unequivocally nationalist, I argue that this book, like *Prairie*, is simultaneously a regionalist text, through its attempts to detail the idiosyncrasies of local practices and, more significantly, a consistent, complex engagement with the spatial poles of "nation" and "region." Region cannot be understood as something separate and distinct from any other political, cultural or spatial construction. It is inevitably and irrevocably in conversation with the nation state, whether it rejects nationalist policies, supports them, or does both. In its efforts to promote the survival of U.S. unity and cohesion at a time of severe crisis, the regional space of *Caddie Woodlawn* becomes the locus for a complex, uneasy project of reunion, ostensibly enacted in the war-ridden 1860s, but with significant implications for the economic crisis moment of the 1930s. The novel "contrasts local and larger perspectives, never settling comfortably" (Lutz 192). In the community of Dunnville, the clash of regional, political, gendered, racial and cultural differences largely results in synthesis, erasure, and amalgamation. For *Caddie*, constructs of "Americanness" are inextricable from constructs of local identity.

The Civil War looms in the text's shadows, mentioned briefly several times as a far-away struggle. While its battles do not directly affect the Woodlawns or their community in ways that alter their daily lives, much of *Caddie*'s dramatic conflict repeats a pattern of bitter sectionalism, followed by happy resolution. Through re-enacting and

refighting these major conflicts and divisions within various ideological categories, and in promising successful conclusions, *Caddie* not only invokes nineteenth-century regionalist discourse around the difficulties of effective postbellum reintegration, but twentieth-century nationalist discourse that, in the 1930s, called for a unified effort against the threat of economic disaster. We did it then, *Caddie* suggests, and we can do it today. If *Prairie* suggests that independence and self-reliance are qualities that have been irrevocably lost in the decades between the 1860s and the 1930s, the communal values for which *Caddie* advocates are still very much within a contemporary grasp.

Caddie has an omnipresent investment in unification, captured through the family's provocative surname, Woodlawn. The name brings together two disparate elements, two contrasting constituents that stand in for numerous binaried categories that are in conflict—and in attempted resolution—throughout the text. The wood and the lawn are also the wild and the tamed, the uncivilized and the domesticated.¹¹ “Woodlawn” condenses in one word much of the work *Caddie* attempts. It establishes an important chronology: settlers grow lawns where woods once existed, not the other way around. It tries for synthesis: the wood and the lawn, co-existent, hybrid, two concepts in one word. It ultimately fails at this synthesis: “wood” and “lawn,” despite this linkage and their negotiation, still jostle against each other, not reconciled. This pattern repeats itself consistently throughout the book, different ideologies, persons, and geographies taking up the mantle of “wood” or “lawn.” The regional community of Dunnville is the “wood” to Boston's “lawn.” The Indians are the “wood” to the white settlers' “lawn.” *Caddie*, a

¹¹ Brink notes in her 1973 introduction that her grandmother's actual surname was Woodhouse, rather than Woodlawn. In altering it, Brink still preserves the binary, suggesting its importance. Houses, like lawns, are signs of social cultivation that counteract the wilds of the wood.

tomboy who prefers roughhousing to domestic duties, is the “wood” to her hyper-feminine Cousin Annabelle’s “lawn.” Despite the text’s attempts at integration, and despite its efforts to trumpet the success of its mergers—the whites and natives keep the peace, Caddie learns to become more feminine—the blunt, dirty demarcations between woods and lawns often remain.

The book’s characters attempt to enact *Caddie*’s process of amalgamation through multiple ideologies that often overlap: racial, gendered, and geographic. There is a problematic, ineffective integration of Native and half-Native people into the white settler town of Dunnville. Caddie attempts to synthesize aggressive masculinity and docile femininity into something she can successfully reproduce. The text reorganizes regional and national spaces—Dunnville, Boston, the North, the South, America, England—away from binary opposites, into complementary pieces of an idealized whole. Each moment in the text, enacted locally, embodies the book’s central concern: its project of negotiating between categories in an attempt to arrive at synthesis. *Caddie Woodlawn* negotiates what it means to be American versus what it means to be of the region. It negotiates between constructions of domesticated whites versus undomesticated savages. It negotiates between the present of the book’s writing and publishing versus the imagined past of its fiction. Importantly, these negotiations are messy ones. They do not encompass holistic, entirely separate categories, but trouble distinctions that divide binaries. While *Caddie* idealizes synthesis, at times the book is a poor crucible, failing to melt its various heterogeneities into a universally homogenous blend. Nevertheless, Brink disregards these consistent ruptures, refusals, and intersections, declaring her project complete in ultimately identifying Caddie as “a pioneer and an American”: a girl simultaneously of

the region *and* of the nation. This neat bow on the final package of the book, however, in no way conceals the holes and overlaps that remain despite these attempts at closure.

Caddie Woodlawn's portrait of regional Americanism, as an act of synthesis and amalgamation, is also a negotiation between temporal poles, in addition to geographic and ideological ones. Like Wilder and Lane, Brink erases an easy divide between the 1930s and the 1860s by familiarizing the historical time period. Brink, however, does this not only by focusing on the family at the novel's center, or by inciting nostalgia in her readers through a production of snugness, but by drawing an indirect comparison between the sectionalism of the Civil War and the economic ruin of the Great Depression. Both crises threaten the survival of the United States itself, and Brink implies that if the imperiled U.S. can overcome one, it can overcome the other through a similar emphasis on unity. Although Brink does not make the war a central focus of her novel, the war is nevertheless essential to *Caddie Woodlawn*. In addition to inviting comparisons to the crisis of the 1930s, it also provides the novel with a historical marker significant to the production of U.S. literary regionalism. For many scholars of regionalism, the Civil War marks the beginning in earnest of a canonical local color movement. Stephanie Foote notes that although "fiction about unassimilated territory or dialect speakers had been produced before the Civil War, its popularity and development as an elite periodical form are post-Civil War phenomena" (4). In the aftermath of sectionalism and war, local color fiction gained a foothold in major literary markets as a paradoxical mechanism for promoting national unity. It offered an "authentic" and soothing rural experience that mediated the pangs and shocks of a nation undergoing significant shifts, both social and geographic. While *Caddie* is not a canonical postbellum

regional text, it connotes this historical practice through its temporal setting, inviting comparison.

None of the Woodlawns are directly affected by the Civil War, although, as the narrator observes, “[n]owadays everyone talked of [it]” (17). Even in far-off Wisconsin, the war is a topic of conversation, a distant object of fascination and slight unease. Visitors, including the circuit rider, Mr. Tanner, bring news of recent battles, and one of the Woodlawns’ hired men “had gone away to fight” (25). John Woodlawn “had paid a man to fight in his place,” although Brink’s narrator does not elaborate on this intriguing detail, emphasizing Mr. Woodlawn’s familial duties over his patriotic ones: “If it weren’t for my wife and children . . . I should be out there fighting for abolition” (ibid).¹² As I will address in detail later in this chapter, John Woodlawn is a significant, even pivotal participant in the production of *Caddie Woodlawn*’s ideological positions, and therefore Brink must defend his draft-dodging in order to maintain his impeachability. His avoidance of the war is not cowardice, but allegiance. John prioritizes the local over the national, despite his sympathies with the abolitionists, and the focus of the scene emphasizes his political and moral belief in racial harmony, rather than his conscription evasion: “God created all men free and equal . . . and men themselves must come to understand that truth at last!” (26). This fascinating tension between John Woodlawn’s actions and his principles reverberates throughout the novel. Here, the gap between the two is somewhat troubling, suggesting a man whose actions belie his principles in ways

¹² Federal conscription law during the years of the Civil War demanded the enlistment of all men between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, and all unmarried men between thirty-five and forty-five. However, “drafted men who presented an ‘acceptable substitute’ or paid three hundred dollars were exempted” (Bernstein 8). No service records exist for the real John Woodlawn (John Woodhouse), but in 1861 he turned thirty-four, and was therefore eligible for conscription.

that negate their morality. In later chapters, however, as I will discuss, that same gap is productive rather than problematic; John subverts his verbal defense of a male/female binary with his personal performance of an identity he defines as “feminine.” The Civil War, then, becomes the introductory point for this delicate practice of polar oscillation and negotiation, serving not only as framework for the novel’s cycles of struggle and resolution, but as a vehicle for its defining theoretical practice. *Caddie Woodlawn* promotes a practice of discursive and geographic reunion, and while it occasionally accomplishes this through a reductive erasure, it also acknowledges that ideological synthesis first requires the uneasy presence of contradictory elements.

Like all other significant parts of *Caddie Woodlawn*, the war cannot be entirely untied from the book’s other ideological interests, as the first allusion to it indicates: “Nowadays everyone talked of the Civil War, which seemed far away from Wisconsin, and of the Indian massacres which seemed uncomfortably near” (25). The threat seemingly posed by the Native population is, for the Woodlawns, a more immediate concern than the Civil War, but no less complex and multifaceted. In some ways, the racial politics of *Caddie Woodlawn* are unsurprising and rote, in their familiar reproduction of common “wild Indian” and “noble savage” Native stereotypes. In others, the book’s politics are deceptively intricate, exceeding what appears on first glance to be a simplistic presentation of Native and white encounters. Caddie herself constitutes a kind of racial crossing between white settlers and American Indians, through the text’s investment in identifying her as a successful intermediary, as a kind of chameleon whose natural “wildness” and “redness” allows her access to white and Native tribes alike (Abate 144). Despite this traversal, presented as productive for both communities, the

characters in *Caddie* who are truly racially mixed—the “half-breed” Hankinson children, sons of a white man and a Native woman—are fundamentally tragic figures, their disheveled bodies and minds a signifier of a failed experiment in miscegenation.

Communal crossing, *Caddie* suggests, is profoundly desirable, particularly when the end goal is co-existent harmony, but the effectiveness of integration has its limits. Although the Hankinson boys are quite literally bicultural and biracial in ways *Caddie*, despite her crossings, is ultimately not, they remain effectively on the margins of Dunnville society. They suggest, through their very existence and ultimate disappearance from the text, the simultaneous reality and impossibility of union.

The Native peoples who live on the lands surrounding Dunnville appear almost immediately, introduced directly after three of the text’s most central characters: *Caddie* and her brothers Tom and Warren.¹³ In *Caddie*’s first paragraphs, the siblings remove their clothes, preparing to swim the Menomonie River, and they are aware that “the Indians” are on the other side, building a birch-bark canoe. The first bits of dialogue condense much of the book’s uneasy yet optimistic engagement with the Native characters that enter and exit it, never fully centered but always apparent on the margins. Warren, the youngest at nine years old, vocalizes the anxieties of the white adult community surrounding him: “Do you think the Indians around here would ever get mad and massacre folks like they did up north?” Tom, the eldest and presumably wisest at thirteen, immediately replies, “No, sir, not these Indians!” This reassuring answer, in turn, is met with *Caddie*’s clarifying, “Not Indian John, anyhow . . . Even if he does have

¹³ Brink does not name any specific tribe or tribes in *Caddie Woodlawn*, but both the Ojibwe and the Santee Dakota lived near the Menomonie during this time period.

a scalp belt” (2-3). The structure of this conversation is one of increased minimization. Warren invokes the “Indians . . . up north,” Tom distinguishes between the northern natives and Dunnville’s local Native population (“these Indians”), and Caddie aims at an even more precise narrowing (“Indian John”). Regional and local identity ameliorate the threat of the racial other. The Native population, acknowledged as a possible threat and a source of apprehension for white settlers, becomes less strange, less threatening, through its specificity and proximity. “Indians” may be a threat, but Indian John, a known figure, is not.

The natives of this part of Wisconsin are “good Indians,” and Indian John, introduced by a white man to Caddie as a “good Indian” before the white man even tells Caddie his name, is the best of them. We know Indian John is a “good Indian” because he shares a given first name with Caddie’s father, John Woodlawn, who arguably serves as the book’s moral compass. Both Johns are dedicated to keeping the peace between their tribes, despite the fears expressed by many members of the white settler community. John Woodlawn secures the Indians’ friendship by “remodel[ing] the guns of the whole tribe” (17-18), while Indian John welcomes the Woodlawn children to watch while his tribe puts together a canoe (9-10). The armistice may be an uneasy one, but it survives, fueled by the Johns’ commitment to neighborly outreach and a sense that co-existence may, in fact, be possible. Thanks largely to these prior efforts at cooperation, and thanks to Caddie’s firm belief that a “good Indian” would never betray white people by leading a massacre, Dunnville avoids an outbreak of bloody conflict between whites and natives based on settler rumor and conjecture. In the aftermath of near massacre of natives by whites, Indian John, his tribe, and the Woodlawns part on friendly terms. “There shall be

no killing tonight, nor any more, I hope, forever,” Caddie’s father vows, his daughter by his side. “I keep the peace, John. The white men shall be your brothers” (141). John repeats the vow, and “[f]or a moment they stood silent, their hands clasped in the clasp of friendship, their heads held high like two proud chieftains” (142). Brink’s language emphasizes equivalency, community, and union. The Johns’ exchange is a mutual affirmation, the two men alike enough to merit a single plural description rather than two separate ones. The handshake of “the white man and the red man” prefigures the handshake of the man in gray and the man in blue, at this point in the narrative still yet to come (141).

Significantly, however, Caddie’s commitment to informing Indian John of the whites’ plan to massacre his tribe generates this specific moment of shared connection between John Woodlawn and Indian John. Caddie’s involvement as ostensible race-crosser, and the very real limits of her capacity for producing effective, lasting racial integration, indicate the deep, profound fissures in *Caddie Woodlawn*’s professed racial harmony between white and native. For much of the text’s first half, Caddie acts as an important mediator between the white settlers and the natives, whom, the narrative tells us, she resembles. Both Caddie’s body and Caddie’s actions point towards her ability to cross racial lines in ways that are, at least superficially, productive for her community. Caddie has “rough and red” hair, an object of fascination for Indian John’s people, who cannot keep “her curls out of their curious fingers” (10). Her complexion is consistently “red” and “flushed,” hair and skin echoing “the common classification of American Indians as ‘redskins’” (Brink 26, 12; Abate 144). The visiting circuit rider asks her embarrassed mother when she plans on “making a young lady out of this wild Indian”

(14). Caddie, her father comments, not without pride, is “running wild” (15). She has the ability to “let out an Indian war whoop” convincing enough to frighten grown men and women (120). It is unsurprising, then, given her ability to “pass,” that Caddie has what Harriet Woodlawn terms “a way with savages” (148). This connection helps avert disaster when Caddie, overhearing white settlers’ plans to pre-emptively murder Indian John’s people, runs away in the night to warn the tribe. Her crossing ensures the preservation of peace and concord.

Michelle Abate has argued that Caddie’s “identification with the region’s indigenous people allows her to cultivate . . . [her] Americanness” (150), and indeed, this “playing Indian” is a process of synthesizing that goes beyond racial crossing to encompass other fusions: the local and the national, the past and the present. Philip Deloria, in examining white America’s constructions of Indianness in the early twentieth century, notes that the death of the frontier struck a chord for those concerned with the development of a new generation of American children. How, they wondered, “would the nation fare if its future leaders lacked the fortitude of those shaped authentically by America’s powerful natural environment?” (101). In her acceptance paper for the 1936 Newbery Medal, Carol Ryrie Brink voices a similar concern. “We are about to lose a most precious contact,” she writes, “with something which has vanished . . . [Our children] have the same bone and muscle [as the pioneers], but they can have no conception of the hardships and struggles and dreams that built these bodies of theirs” (“Acceptance” 143). Caddie’s racial crossing is a product of this concern. Her Indianness becomes not an indicator of her foreignness/otherness, but the process by which she becomes more authentically American, able to participate in the processes of unification

and mutual reliance that *Caddie* presents as emblematic of the nation state. Her close contact with the local, “natural” region, a world represented in *Caddie Woodlawn* by the Native peoples that inhabit the woods of western Wisconsin, is an act of earning national citizenship. Race-crossing in this novel is also time-crossing; Brink attempts to reconstruct her ideas of Americanness for a new generation of readers, and she does this through providing them with a character who, by playing Indian, has “the pioneer qualities of courage, willingness to go meet the unknown” (“Acceptance” 144). Brink suggests in her acceptance paper that Caddie is the closest many of her readers will come to “something which has vanished”: the closed frontier and the Indian population increasingly mythologized by white Americans as “disappeared.” Caddie’s close proximity to natives, therefore, enables her to bring together not only the Indian and white communities, but the region to the nation, and the vanished past to the mourning present.

It is impossible, however, to effectively discuss racial crossing in *Caddie Woodlawn* without addressing the characters of Gussie, Pete, and Sammie Hankinson, sons of a white man and a Native woman. Despite the extent to which the text is invested in presenting Caddie as someone who can successfully traverse whiteness and Indianness, Caddie is ultimately white, and still accesses all the cultural and social privileges granted to someone seen as white. The existence of the Hankinson children, and the ways their failed integration into Dunnville signal a breakdown in community, belie the synthesis Caddie attempts to achieve through playing Indian. In their blurring of racial lines that extend far beyond Caddie’s wildness and redness, the Hankinsons represent the limits of integration. They constitute a rejection of binaries, resisting what Cheryl Walker terms

the “reductivism of hegemony” through maintaining a paradox, “the contradiction implied by two incompatible discourses within which it becomes clear that there are gaps and fissures one cannot dismiss” (Walker in Brown 11). The living models of the unreconciled “wood” and the “lawn” in Caddie’s surname, the local performance of a national investment in assimilation, Gus, Pete, and Sammie simultaneously embody amalgamation’s reality and its utter impossibility. They exist and they are not welcome. Their ultimate disappearance midway through the text suggests Brink’s inability to collapse them into the synthesis she attempts to produce.

Historically, white settlers had complicated reactions towards mixed families, especially those that chose to live within white frontier communities. Some actively embraced miscegenation as “one of the last opportunities to change Indian life . . . forming multiracial families comprised of ‘half-breeds’” that would serve primarily to thin out Native threats to whites (Oertel 49). Others came to believe that mixed blood signaled “faulty stock,” an infection of otherness that doomed the half-breed body (Riley 58). The Hankinsons seem caught at this nexus of warring approval, subsisting on the margins of a white community whose curiosity masquerades as bare tolerance. Brink presents the Hankinson children as deserving objects of pity who serve, primarily, as canvases onto which the Woodlawn children may draw their needs and desires. In one incident, Tom, Caddie, and Warren, looking to offload their hated turkey lunches, arrange a trade with Gussie, whose “black eyes” sparkle “in his brown face” at the prospect of being “offered a piece of white bread with turkey in it.” The narrator explains that the children’s mother “cooked as the Indians did, and [their] father was too indolent to try to teach her the white man’s way of preparing food” (106). The Hankinsons’ place on the

far margins of Dunnville society are therefore not the fault of the white community for refusing to accept a mixed family, but the mixed family's fault for failing to enact the process of becoming white. Sam Hankinson and his wife have neglected what *Caddie Woodlawn* sees as a consummate responsibility: working together so that the family becomes part of a unified whole. The provocative word "indolent" is strict condemnation, implying an ethical failure that transcends simple neglect. Betraying one's social and moral responsibility to reunite divided houses is an unconscionable, indefensible failure.

This is a family that cannot hold within the world of the text, and unsurprisingly, the next time we meet the Hankinsons they are disintegrating. Interrupting lessons, Mrs. Hankinson visits the schoolhouse to say goodbye to her sons:

Her little boys turned now and saw her, and the youngest one held out his arms and gave a little stifled cry. With a swift movement, like a bird alighting from a low bough, the Indian woman ran to her children and knelt beside them, gathering first one and then another into her arms. She spoke to them in her own language, words guttural, broken, and soft as the chatter of a mother partridge to her brood. The boys answered in the same language, clinging to her and crying. By this time half of the white children were on their feet and Miss Parker had come down from her platform. The reading lesson was forgotten in a sudden sense of trouble and unrest. (156-57)

Mrs. Hankinson kisses her children and stands up, while they cling to her skirts, crying her name. To Miss Parker, the teacher, she announces, "I go to my people," and then leaves the schoolroom while the boys continue to sob. While the bird imagery Brink uses to describe Mrs. Hankinson is significant for its participation in a larger, troubling tradition of comparing Native people to animals, the kinesic emphasized by Brink's figurative language is the heart of this passage, functioning as reinforcement for the narrative of (re)union. *Caddie* suggests that the Hankinson family fails not because

Dunnville is racist and anti-miscegenation, but because Sam Hankinson's indolence prevents them from merging successfully with the white community. The Hankinsons, in short, are defined by their separateness and their immobility. Mrs. Hankinson's action, her "swift movement, like a bird alighting from a low branch," is primarily meaningful because it is a catalytic spark to the engine of amalgamation. It is no accident that these movements receive an equal reaction. The other students stand, and Miss Parker "come[s] down from her platform," meeting Mrs. Hankinson halfway, the schoolroom caught up in the locomotion of unrest. The emotional tragedy of this scene does not solely result from the wrenching tragedy of a mother's undesired departure from her children, but, implicitly, from Sam Hankinson's failure to adequately fulfill his social responsibilities, and to deliver his wife and children from their regionalized, racialized otherness into the American family. Although we are meant, on one level, to grieve, as Caddie does, for Gussie, Pete, and Sammie's loss, we are also meant to see this as the first, essential step towards a positive merging of the boys into the community of Dunnville. The unrest produced by Mrs. Hankinson's departure is generative and dynamic. Her actions both foreshadow and make possible her sons' inevitable entrance into the process of enacting whiteness.

Caddie, as the novel's lynchpin between Native and white, is therefore the natural bridge to bring the Hankinson boys into the wider Dunnville community. She invites Gussie, Pete, and Sammie to come with her to the Dunnville general store, where she announces to Mr. Adams, the owner, that she wants to spend the silver dollar she's earned from her uncle on the boys: "I want some hoarhound [sic] and peppermint and some pink wintergreens, and then I want three tops in different colors with good strong

strings . . . I'd like to see some combs, if you please . . . Thirty cents' worth of nice, cheerful red handkerchiefs" (161-63). The Hankinsons are astounded at their good fortune: "Candy! Tops! No one had ever bought such things for them before . . . [They] were speechless with delight. The red [handkerchiefs were] like music to their half-savage eyes . . . [T]hey tumbled out of the store, whooping with joy and entirely forgetting (if they ever knew) that thanks were in order" (161-64). Caddie's benevolent maternal imperialism demands the twenty-first century reader's focus, as do Brink's racist adjectives and problematic othering, but these elements, while important, do not alone constitute the entire significance of this scene. In the general store, a decidedly local space, peculiar to the individual needs of the Dunville community, Caddie introduces these three boys to a standardized, nationalized Western system of commodification. Gussie, Pete, and Sammie's lives have, until now, been entirely defined by their experiences of regional foods and peoples. Much like the Christmas exchange in *Little House on the Prairie*, where Mary and Laura—with similar speechless delight—receive cakes, candy, cups, and pennies, Caddie's gifting to the Hankinson boys is a uniting act through processes of commercialism and consumption. She accomplishes what Mr. and Mrs. Hankinson fail to do. These moments do retain important differences. The *Prairie* scene derives its power from a creation of a familiar and nostalgic homespace that invites readers into an ostensibly inclusive space of snugness, while this specific *Caddie* scene is far more contained within the world of the text, focusing on the importance of introducing racial others to a white-structured and white-dominated capitalist system. *Caddie* explicitly recognizes that entrance into this national community first requires intervention on the regional level. Nevertheless, both *Caddie* and *Prairie*

use commodities as lynchpins between separated entities, bridging significant gaps with the help of desirable, appropriated possessions. If *Caddie* does not invite the reader to “think of having” in the same way that *Prairie* does, Brink still makes the point that the learned performance of acceptable whiteness by mixed Indian children requires the local introduction of a Western system of exchange.¹⁴ Candy and cups create localized homes; candy and handkerchiefs create a local community that harmonizes with nationalized practices.

In many ways, Gussie, Pete, and Sammie Hankinson capture the complex, fraught attitudes of white Americans towards Native Americans in the early decades of the twentieth century. Popular representations of Indians in these years, as Philip Deloria notes, were inevitably mixed both racially and rhetorically: “The absorbed Indians wearing white man’s clothes represented the ambivalent success of American imperialism. Becoming one with the empire, they justified the noble rhetoric of the white man’s burden, which bespoke concern for converted savages” (104). White America continued its vacillation between a dichotomy of repulsion and desire for Native lives, bodies, and experiences. However, as centuries of slaughter gave way to whites’ general sense that American procedures had neutralized the Native threat, the swinging policy pendulum that rocked for two centuries between “genocide” and “assimilation” hovered closer and closer to the latter practice. Within this paradigm of assimilation and absorption, therefore, the Hankinson boys become marginally acceptable, a local performance of a national discourse. Using handkerchiefs, combing their hair with white

¹⁴ The extent to which Brink others the Hankinson boys prevents implied readers from identifying with them and their desire for “things.” In this scene, we are not meant to “think of having,” we are meant, like Caddie, to think of giving.

men's tools, playing with tops, and eating candy, they become "one with the empire," gaining entrance into adequacy through losing markers of otherness, and allowing Caddie to perform her Americanness through shouldering the white man's burden. And yet, this absorption is not entirely successful, despite Caddie's gleeful response: "[S]he'd had her dollar's worth . . . 'I wanted to drive that awful lonesome look out of their eyes, and it did, Tom. It did!'" (164). The last we see of the Hankinsons, they run away from the store "whooping" without a word to Caddie, unable or unwilling to put their happiness into words. "Whooping," in *Caddie Woodlawn*, is a word associated with Native peoples; Caddie herself often lets loose "Indian war whoops" that unnerve others with their accuracy. Caddie may have adorned Gussie, Pete, and Sammie with the trappings of white civilization, but the degree of that operation's success is in doubt, as the boys seem at this point incapable or disinclined to meet her halfway, to bring their "wood" to Caddie's "lawn."

The gifts delivered, Caddie's money spent, and her satisfaction at playing imperial mother achieved, the Hankinsons abruptly disappear from the text. We can read this vanishing in different ways: as an absorption so complete and absolute it does not require elaboration, or as an important fissure in the process of synthesis Brink hopes to advocate. The text views the Hankinsons' absence as evidence of the former, implying that their disappearance is necessary fallout from the completion of Caddie's lesson, and that their introduction into a capitalist system of exchange is adequate foreshadowing of the complete assimilation presumably to come. Nevertheless, their complete departure is troubling, and suggests that for the world *Caddie Woodlawn* creates, erasure and absorption are one and the same. Brink understands that the promotion of racial unity

must be a significant part of her book if she is to advocate for the construction of regional and national community, but she shrinks back from showing that community's acceptance of the Hankinson children, instead implying it through the absence of textual conflict. In a work that takes as its creative thesis the importance of bridging gaps and producing conditions under which union and reunion become possible, the Hankinsons constitute an important challenge. They embody the lived realities of union and amalgamation, while retaining meaningful variations and deviations that preclude their easy absorption into a happy whole. Brink must resort to character erasure to guarantee that the *mélange* of her narrative remains homogenous.

Race is only one of the ideological categories Brink is invested in exploring. As Michelle Abate observes, processes of racial formation in *Caddie Woodlawn* are inevitably and inextricably intertwined with processes of gender formation: "White tomboyism and American Indian tribalism are mutually constructed . . . Caddie's tomboyish ability to cross the gender line between masculinity and femininity becomes mapped onto an ability to cross the racial one separating Anglo-Americans and American Indians" (144). Playing "Indian" is also playing "boy," and Caddie's negotiation between binaries of race is also partly a negotiation between binaries of gender. These crossings are superficially similar in their narrative arcs: Caddie performs a role that defies social and cultural norms, and ultimately leaves behind these behaviors for ones that better fulfill the criteria for whiteness and femininity. Like many other literary girls in nineteenth and early twentieth-century novels, Caddie learns the importance of quieting down; to stop, as her father puts it, "run[ning] with the colts" (245). However, this quieting down is more complex than it appears at first glance. The shift in Caddie's

gender presentation at the end of the novel is significant because she learns, successfully, how to synthesize femininity and masculinity into a gendered self that balances social expectations and her own desires. I read gender in *Caddie Woodlawn* not as Caddie's failure to preserve her gender blending past childhood into adolescence, or as the inevitable and familiar transformation of a tomboy into an acceptable girl, but as a subtle, effective renegotiation of what "being female" can mean for an eleven-year-old white settler in 1860s Wisconsin. While Caddie sets aside some of her "wild" behavior for overtly domestic duties at her father's request, this concession is not a rejection of maleness in exchange for femininity, but rather an overt embrace of John Woodlawn's own complex gender performance: what Brink presents as a laudable blend of morally upright masculinity and nurturing femininity. Just as *Caddie* engages with race in its attempt to stage a project of ideological reunion, it stakes out a provocative gray region between hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity for its protagonist—"a pioneer and an American," a child defined by multiple loyalties—to mediate.

The first sentences of *Caddie Woodlawn* not only introduce Caddie as a "wild . . . little tomboy," but also acknowledge the division of the Woodlawn family along largely gendered lines: "She was the despair of her mother and of her elder sister, Clara. But her father watched her with a little shine of pride in his eyes, and her brothers accepted her as one of themselves without a question" (1). If *Caddie Woodlawn* is a novel that reenacts the bitter sectionalism of the American Civil War on a local level, this split is arguably the novel's most critical, a separation that divides the family spatially, temperamentally, and ideologically. Although the division seems to be along gender lines, between a familiar binary of masculine outdoors and feminine indoors, masculine roughness and

feminine passivity, it is, in fact, primarily between Mrs. Woodlawn's "despair" and Mr. Woodlawn's "pride," two words that signal the emotional stakes of this familial tear. Caddie and her mother have a somewhat strained relationship defined largely by absence, a marked contrast to the warm connection between Caddie and her father. While Harriet Woodlawn is not wholly cruel or unfeeling towards Caddie, she reacts to Caddie's behavior with near universal displeasure. It is with her father, and her father's actions, that Caddie aligns herself, emotionally and physically: "Sometimes Caddie envied Mother and Clara, who were so dark and calm and beautiful, who seemed to find it so easy to be clean and good . . . [but] whatever Father said was true, and . . . she loved him better than anybody else on earth. She was glad that her hair was rough and red like his" (26). Confronted with the shadow of her mother's disapproval, Caddie turns into the light of her father's approbation. John Woodlawn's truth wins out over Harriet Woodlawn's goodness and cleanliness, his roughness over her calm beauty.

This alignment, however, does not mean that Caddie identifies wholly with masculine traits, or that her identification with her father is innately part of a tomboyish nature. It instead signals Brink's commitment to a gendering that transcends normative behavior for a settler narrative set in the nineteenth century. In many ways, John Woodlawn exhibits traits stereotypically associated with the feminine. He is nurturing, loving, and affectionate towards his children and his community; he is diplomatic, artistic, and proficient at craftwork. Although he works primarily as a mill mechanic, his signature talent is his ability to repair clocks, a talent Caddie shares with her father, and he spends a great deal of time within the domestic space of the home. Mrs. Woodlawn, on the other hand, is emotionally distant, ruthlessly efficient, quick to anger, and

physically violent.¹⁵ While she only expresses the latter in a context and method that was perfectly acceptable for the time period, her violence stems from resentment at Caddie's unwillingness to adhere to a gender binary, exploding out of a slowly building tension that has simmered throughout the novel. It is John Woodlawn who intercedes, advocating another, more palatable kind of gender blending that Mrs. Woodlawn is unable or unwilling to encourage.

After Caddie and her brothers humiliate their excessively feminine Cousin Annabelle by playing a practical joke on her, a furious Harriet Woodlawn singles out Caddie alone for punishment, striking her across the legs with a riding whip: "I cannot blame [my sons] so much. But that a *daughter* of mine should so far forget herself in her hospitality to a guest—that she should be such a hoyden as to neglect her proper duties as a lady! Shame to her! Shame!" (240). Smarting emotionally and physically, Caddie is severely distressed by what she views as her mother's injustice, and unable to forgive her for showing the boys preference. She tosses and turns on her bed until her father comes in to comfort her, in a scene that arguably serves as the emotional climax and thesis statement for *Caddie Woodlawn*:

He began to speak in his nice quiet voice . . . "Perhaps Mother was a little hasty today, Caddie," he said. ". . . It's a strange thing, but somehow we expect more of girls than of boys. It is the sisters and wives and mothers, you know, Caddie, who keep the world sweet and beautiful . . . A woman's task is to teach [men and boys] gentleness and courtesy and love and kindness . . . [It's] harder than cutting trees or building mills or damming rivers. It takes nerve and courage and patience, but good women have those things. They have them as just as much as the men who build bridges and carve roads through the wilderness. A woman's work is

¹⁵ I am not arguing that these traits exhibited by Mr. and Mrs. Woodlawn are inherently feminine or masculine, but that acts of social production in the United States have, for centuries, gendered them along these lines. John Woodlawn is not innately more feminine because he is kind and gentle, but because many of the behaviors he reproduces are ones typically recognized as female virtues.

something fine and noble to grow up to, and it is just as important as a man's. But no man could ever do it so well. I don't want you to be the silly, affected person with fine clothes and manners whom folks sometimes call a lady . . . I want you to be a woman with a wise and understanding heart, healthy in body and honest in mind. Do you think you would like to be growing up into that woman now?" (244-45)

His speech prompts Caddie's tears, "which had not wanted to come all day," and she flings herself into her father's arms:

Mr. Woodlawn held her a long time, his rough beard pressed against her cheek. Then, with his big hands, which were so delicate with clockwork, he helped her to undress and straighten the tumbled bed. Then he kissed her again and took his candle and went away. And now the room was cool and pleasant again, and even Caddie's tears were not unpleasant, but part of the cool relief she felt. In a few moments she was fast asleep. (246)

This lengthy scene is not a simple "put away boyish things" moment, but a delicate negotiation of a gendered gray area. Caddie, Tom, and Warren's prank on Cousin Annabelle is a catalyst for Mrs. Woodlawn's anger in part because it epitomizes what Harriet Woodlawn sees as Caddie's continued assault on the feminine traits and habits Harriet values so highly. Her outburst—"Shame to her! Shame!"—echoes the division set forth by the very first sentences of the novel, contrasting John Woodlawn's pride in his daughter with Harriet's despondency over her wildness. What Mrs. Woodlawn passes off as punishment for a disobedient act is—as she makes clear through her gendered distinctions and refusal to discipline her sons—in fact punishment for Caddie's constant refusal to accept her appropriate role. Caddie does not only "forget herself in her hospitality to a guest," but, more importantly, "neglect[s] her proper duties as a lady." The major transgression here, then, is not Caddie's, but Harriet's, as she perpetuates and deepens the already extant familial division along gendered lines. In *Caddie Woodlawn*, schism is the ultimate sin and reunion the highest virtue.

It therefore falls to John Woodlawn to begin the process of healing his wife's violence, and the speech he delivers (in a "nice quiet voice" that contrasts with Harriet's angry tones) is largely an act of suture. It slowly stitches a divide Caddie has struggled with for the length of the novel, enabling her to put together a gendered self that she can successfully and acceptably perform into adolescence and adulthood. Certainly Mr. Woodlawn's words perform many different functions, not all of them therapeutic ones. They constitute an argument for the production of manifest domesticity, explicitly comparing "women's work" to "build[ing] bridges and carv[ing] roads through the wilderness," and implicitly contending that its successful completion provides the foundation for settler colonial labor. They seem to perpetuate an essentialized and unfair division between female/nurturing and male/rough, assigning women the non-negotiated task of soothing brutal masculinity into something resembling human behavior. However, the complicated, non-binariad gender performance of Caddie's father, in this scene and throughout the rest of Brink's book, effectively subverts the essentializing impulses of his speech. John Woodlawn, not his wife Harriet, "keep[s] the world" of the novel "sweet and beautiful." John, not Harriet, teaches his daughter "gentleness and courtesy and love and kindness." John, not Harriet, has a "wise and understanding heart." Despite the apparent division here of "women's work" and "men's work," Caddie's *father* is the parent who serves as the model of femininity he and the novel promote as essential to the production of Western culture. Ultimately, John's speech is less about advocating distinct male and female roles, and more about the importance of educating children in ways that allow them to grow up and contribute to society in ways that are not tangible, or consumable, or marketable. Caddie's task is to pass on to her own children the coalescing

affection her father has given her: in short, to take up with pride the mantle of unity he wears on his own broad shoulders. Notably, he uses place-centered images to make his plea, implicitly aligning his discursive construction of gender with location, and suggesting that the two are inextricable.

The moment of wordless comfort father and daughter share after this speech is as important as the speech itself, filled with language that dances around feminine and masculine constructs, never settling on either. Mr. Woodlawn embraces Caddie, his “rough beard” pressed against her smooth cheek, the word “rough” recalling its use just three paragraphs earlier to describe a masculinized world, the warmth of his embrace balancing the coarseness of his beard. The following sentence runs back and forth across gendered lines, its three clauses connected not only through their commas, but through their complex negotiation of masculine and feminine signifiers. John Woodlawn’s “big hands,” “so delicate with clockwork,” help Caddie to “undress and straighten the tumbled bed.” The image of his hands is a decidedly masculine one, implying considerable physical strength, and it is immediately subverted by their description as “so delicate,” along with the reminder that he shares with his daughter a talent for intricate clock making. He uses these “delicate” and “big hands” to rearrange and make her bed, a task associated almost universally with the feminized domestic space, and his actions are so effective that even in his absence, the room is fundamentally changed, now “cool and pleasant.” If John Woodlawn’s words appear to perpetuate a stark division between the roles of men and the roles of women, his actions and characterization fundamentally undercut that division, advocating an synthesis that serves as an effective model for his conflicted daughter.

To underscore the point that Caddie's transition is not along binaried lines, Brink continues her blending of gender roles into the subsequent chapter. Caddie, willing now to educate herself, watches her sister Clara and Cousin Annabelle quilting: "She stood with her feet wide apart and her hands in her apron pockets like a boy. But for once she was not scornful of women's work. 'Do you think I could learn how?' she asked . . . 'I guess if I can mend clocks, I ought to be able to quilt.'" The girls are generous and welcoming, and soon Caddie's quilting skills are "quite as good as Clara or Annabelle[']s . . . [she was] so pleased with herself that she thought quilting one of the greatest sports in the world" (249). Caddie does not leave behind her boyishness, as her stance indicates, or scoop out defined parts of her identity, but instead builds on it, learning a skill that she views along the same lines as clock-making, an act previously established as dual-gendered. After Caddie brags to her brothers about her newly acquired expertise, Tom and Warren, used to accompanying their sister in all her exploits, decide to become experts as well: "[B]efore Clara knew what was happening to her precious quilt, the boys had taken possession, and the three erstwhile adventures were making riotous scrolls and roses all over it . . . So it turned out that, when Caddie began to learn to be a housewife, the boys became housewives, too" (250-51). There is no real sense that Tom and Warren will retain this interest into adulthood. Their willingness to learn is born out of a desire to share in their sister's ventures, not a legitimate attraction to quilting. However, their joining in neutralizes, at least temporarily, the gendered implications of "women's work," allowing Caddie to enjoy it primarily as an act that enables her to expand her repertoire of knowledge and skill. Most importantly, quilting brings Caddie closer to her mother and sister. This is not, at its root, a gendered act, but a practice of "gentleness and courtesy

and love and kindness,” performing the role her father embodies, rather than the role society dictates Caddie should play.

This negotiation of gender in ways that privilege non-binary identifications is, like *Caddie*'s difficult negotiation of race, a reenactment of reunion, mirroring the sectionalism of the United States during the Civil War, and making a case for the importance of national unity in a time of unprecedented economic crisis. *Caddie* performs this messy process of integration and amalgamation on the regional level, knitting together gender performativity and regional performativity in a way that makes the two ideological categories inextricable from one another. In their feminist critique of nineteenth-century American women's regional literature, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse argue that regionalism, as a practice that promotes the voices of marginalized populations, “offer[s] alternative ways of knowing that ‘take place,’ become located or regionalized, in the gaps within ideology” (253). Although regionalism does not always defend or promote the lives of racial and gendered others, one of the genre's defining characteristics is, as Fetterley and Pryse point out, an interest in disturbing easy divisions between literal and conceptual borders. Brink, in *Caddie Woodlawn*, fulfills this criterion of regionalism by troubling ideological binaries in a way that specifically grounds them in place. The racial divisions between white and Native are partially rooted in disagreements as to whom the local land belongs. The conflict surrounding the Hankinsons has to do with their presence in the community, Mrs. Hankinson's physical departure, and the subsequent absence of the Hankinson boys after Caddie performs her act of imperial benevolence. It is through the process of gender blurring, however, that *Caddie* regionalizes these alternative ways of knowing. Caddie's punishment at the hands

of her mother results from a prank Harriet Woodlawn identifies as supremely unfeminine, and therefore connects clearly to earlier skirmishes in the text over Caddie's gender identity. However, the trick Caddie and her brothers play on their visiting Cousin Annabelle, a resident of Boston, stems from a conflict that has as much to do with contested geographic identity and region as with masculinity and femininity.

The Woodlawns are from Boston, a place none of the children, with the exception of Clara, are old enough to remember clearly, as they came to Wisconsin seven years before the events of the novel. The division between Harriet and Clara Woodlawn, and the rest of the family, is regional *and* gendered:

Mr. Tanner [the circuit rider] was from Boston, too. [F]or Mrs. Woodlawn, the real beauty and meaning of life centered in the churches, the bookshops, the lecture rooms of Boston . . . The children, all except Clara, who remembered and loved Boston, listened [to their conversation] with wide eyes of astonishment. For how could anyone prefer Boston to this enchanting place of adventure, of lake and river, prairie and forest? (19-20)

Boston figures prominently in much canonical regionalist fiction. As a major urban publishing center of the late nineteenth century, it was the implicit backdrop against which many writers and publishers produced "regionalism" as a marketable construct. One of regionalism's most famous canonical works, Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Country of the Pointed Firs," has a narrator who travels from Boston to Dunnet Landing, Maine, and her observations and exchanges in that small town are partially based on her urban roots.¹⁶ Rural regionalist fiction is defined, either implicitly or explicitly, by its contrast with the urban place/space it acknowledges. *Caddie* functions as a regional text in part

¹⁶ The town nearest the Woodlawns' homestead, Dunnville, shares a prefix with the town in Jewett's story, Dunnet Landing.

because it uses Boston to clearly define what Dunnville is not. It acknowledges a system of center-periphery that it immediately subverts through the Woodlawn children's limited worldview. Boston, aligned with Harriet and Clara, and later Cousin Annabelle, is feminized, described with adjectives like "beauty," while Dunnville, the home of Caddie, her father, and her brothers, is masculine, a "place of adventure." These divisions between the feminine city and the masculine region, however, cannot stand. We know from Brink's commitment to physical and ideological reunion that the stark contrast of urban and rural, of male and female, will not outlast the text.

Caddie dedicates its final chapters to one of the most familiar plots in regionalist writing: the entrance of a city dweller into the region, and the strange shocks that result from her encounters with the locals. Caddie's cousin Annabelle arrives to visit from Boston, a "sweet and fresh" young lady in "tiny buttoned shoes, with her tiny hat tilted over her nose and its velvet streamers floating out behind . . . Caddie suddenly felt all clumsy hands and feet when she saw this delicate apparition" (224). That Annabelle's visit occurs more than two hundred pages from the start of the novel is no accident. Brink ensures that her twentieth-century readers are entirely familiar with Caddie and her family before introducing a discordant "stranger" into their sphere. *Caddie*'s implied child readers, brought up in a world with electricity and radios, airplanes and motion pictures, are in some ways tourists in Dunville, as unfamiliar with rural ways as Cousin Annabelle. By the time Annabelle enters the world of the story, however, readers are far more acquainted with the Woodlawns' comfortable, agreeable surroundings than they are with Annabelle's stiff, fitted bodice with "eight and eighty" buttons decorating it front and back: "Six more than Bessie Beaseley and fourteen more than Mary Adams" (229).

Annabelle's voice, mannerisms and dress are all entirely foreign, slightly snobbish, and ultimately ridiculous. She pronounces Dunnville "quaint and rustic" twice within the span of four pages, and when Caddie's brother Tom, irritated by Annabelle's airs, asks her if Dunnville isn't as good a place as Boston, laughs, "Why, Tom, Boston is one of the world's great cities—the only one *I'd* care to live in, I am sure; and Dunnville . . . isn't even on the maps yet" (227). There are clear echoes here of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman's well-known regionalist story "The Jamesons" (1899), told from the perspective of a bemused, mildly irritated resident of a small New England town invaded by an overbearing, outlandish family from New York City who have come to stay for the summer. Just as Freeman familiarizes her tourist readers with local life through a sympathetic narrator who confides, disbelievingly, in her implied audience, Brink transports her readers out of a twentieth-century location into the nineteenth-century Wisconsin frontier through the way she distances Boston from the text's center, defamiliarizing the urban and centering the rural.

The development of the subplot relies not only on Annabelle's feminized airs, out of place in a decidedly ungentle outdoors environment, but on her lack of local knowledge. Caddie, Tom, and Warren encourage Annabelle to "salt the sheep," indicating that she should hold the salt in her hands while the sheep come to her. Drawn to the salt, the sheep swarm Annabelle, frightening her and eating the "eight and eighty" buttons off of her dress. Nevertheless, Annabelle proves to be a good sport, and pronounces the experience "quaint," announcing that "they'll hardly believe it when I tell them about it in Boston" (236). Her airs of superiority diminish significantly, and she has "almost nothing to say about the superiority of her native city over the rest of the

uncivilized world” (ibid). While Caddie becomes uncomfortable about the series of tricks she and her brothers are playing on her cousin, Brink implicitly suggests that, although the Woodlawn children’s methods may be slightly cruel, their effect is not altogether unearned. Annabelle’s gullibility is partially due to her lack of knowledge about other locales than her own; Caddie, Tom, and Warren’s tricks are, to some extent, supported by the text as reasonable punishment for Annabelle’s sin of extreme polarity. The project of reunion demands from her—as it does from Caddie—the willingness to meet others halfway. While Caddie’s *détente* with Annabelle and the female members of her family may seem, at first glance, to be entirely about Caddie’s renegotiation of her gender identity, it is also a process of regional cohesion, of reaching across the ostensibly wide gulf between Boston and Dunnville and discovering common ground.

No sooner do Boston and Dunnville reach this happy accord than a new geographical discord presents itself: not regional periphery versus urban center, but foreign state versus domestic national. John Woodlawn receives a letter informing him that he is next in line to receive a great deal of property from now deceased relatives in England. If he and his family renounce American citizenship, returning to England to live, they will inherit both land and title, becoming lords and ladies. Caddie, like her father, is “troubled” by the decision ahead of them, with an “uncomfortable little ache in her . . . heart” (258). Thinking over the choice the Woodlawns have to make, she leaves the house after dinner to sit under the dark sky, marked by “thousands of stars . . . There would be stars in England, but would they be so bright, so beautiful? The smell of clover and new hay tugged at her heart. Would anything in England smell as sweet? And, when Indian John came back to find the treasures he had left with her, would she be gone?”

(259). The conflict between North and South, East and West, hinted at by the text's occasional references to the Civil War, and brought into the forefront by Cousin Annabelle's visit, is entirely subsumed by this realignment of geographic identity. This is not, however, a generic America, but a specific one, defined by a spread of bright stars, clover, and new hay. Caddie herself clarifies the decision the Woodlawns face: to "go to England or stay in Wisconsin" (268), rather than the decision to go to England or stay in America. America, in short, is Wisconsin, and Wisconsin America. In *Caddie Woodlawn*, the region is the nation coalesced, synthesized, made manageable and consumable. It does not only support the state, but stands in for the state. Through identifying Wisconsin as quintessentially American, Brink implies that the construction of national unity necessarily includes the local, the tangible, and the everyday regional. As in *Little House on the Prairie*, the emphasis on the national in no way makes this text any less regional. It is on the regional level that characters enact processes of nationalism, through local, immediate, personal acts.

Unsurprisingly, the Woodlawns elect to stay in Dunnville, through secret ballot, and Harriet Woodlawn, who had previously declared her desire to leave, changes her mind abruptly: "I never knew how much I loved it here until I had to choose—better than England . . . better than Boston! Home is where you are, Johnny!" (270). She bursts into tears and embraces her husband, while their children watch, awestruck by their mother's uncharacteristic display of emotion. More so than any other character in *Caddie Woodlawn*, Harriet represents the extremes of polarity, the indolence of intractability, and so her outburst is significant. While Caddie's major contribution to the novel's culture of synthesis falls largely within a gendered framework, Harriet's movement away from her

rigid position is place-centered, a claim for the primacy of the local's smallest unit: the home. The Woodlawn house in Dunnville, she cries, is "better than England," "better than Boston." Despite Harriet's ultimate partiality towards Wisconsin, the messy alignment of these varied locations—the rural local, the urban center, the foreign national—allows *Caddie Woodlawn* to make an argument for the dismantling of discursive borders and hierarchies between physical sites, as well as emotional ones. Brink implicitly equates Dunnville, Boston, and England, erasing all distinctions other than personal preference. America is, as Harriet unambiguously states, wherever "Johnny" is: John Woodlawn, the embodiment of synthesis, the ultimate representation of successful amalgamation.

This skillfully wrought theoretical framework is why Caddie, facing the west in the final sentences of the novel, must think of herself as "a pioneer and an American," rather than as a pioneer, or an American alone. "Pioneer" and "American," two provocative terms redolent with history and complicated longing, are therefore placeholder signifiers for the novel's oscillating system of binaries: the local and the national, the Native and the white, the past and the present, the male and the female, the wood and the lawn. Through its negotiation of what it means to be American, to perform Americanness, *Caddie Woodlawn* promotes nationalism with regional exchange. In reading this novel alongside *Little House on the Prairie*, we see the other side of a national conversation around values, morals, and taste enacted at the local level, indicating that the ideological productions of a nation-state can and does involve the immediate and the tangible. "It runs," Tom marvels when Caddie repairs her first clock. Caddie and her father mend more than time; they do more than fix the clocks so that 1935

ticks alongside the 1860s. They mend extremes, too, advocating resolution, tightening the screws that latch together disparate parts and beliefs. This approach, *Caddie Woodlawn* believes, is essential to the continued success of the United States, through and past the trials of the Great Depression. The U.S. depicted in this novel thrives on the reunion of region and nation. It runs.

The presentation of the 1936 Newbery Award to *Caddie Woodlawn* over *Little House on the Prairie* helps illuminate some of the significant differences between the two novels. *Prairie*'s continued popularity into the twenty-first century would suggest its acknowledgement, not the less-remembered *Caddie*, but it was the latter book that received the highest honor available to works for children. Why did the American Library Association recognize *Caddie* and not *Prairie*? The answer lies in the books' divergent approaches towards framing nationalist ideologies: *Prairie* with some skepticism, *Caddie* with cheerful, uncritical reproduction. *Prairie*'s engagement with the nation state is unsympathetic and, in some important ways, anti-hegemonic. Its unequivocal privileging of self-reliance and individualism is at aggressive, direct odds with the popular political dialogue of the 1930s.¹⁷ Nowhere in *Prairie* do the Ingalls extoll the virtues of being American, only the virtues of independent pioneer life, which include living far away from other human beings. *Caddie*, conversely, is shamelessly patriotic. Brink explicitly reminds her readers again and again that the Woodlawns are consummate Americans in their commitment to fairness, morality, democracy, and mutual reliance. Laura Ingalls may be a pioneer, but Caddie Woodlawn is a pioneer and an American. The New Deal-

¹⁷ *Little House on the Prairie* predominantly reinforces ideological constructions which benefit settler colonialism and the nation state, making it impossible to define the text as unequivocally anti-hegemonic. Despite this, Wilder and Lane were undeniably writing against popular cultural sentiment in a way that intentionally challenged what they believed to be harmful rhetoric and practice.

era ALA chose to honor the children's book that values working together, rather than the children's book that values working independently.

Despite these important differences, these multilayered, complex works of fiction are equally significant milestones in the development of a regional children's literature. *Prairie* remains a fictional giant not only for its ubiquitous presence on children's bookshelves for the last eighty years, but for its careful, dexterous fashioning of language and its commitment to a remarkable intricacy of perspective. *Caddie*, while less visible and less celebrated, has never been out of print, thanks to its Newbery Award, and remains widely available today. But while a regionalist lens enables us to appreciate *Prairie* and *Caddie*'s provocative complexity, I believe the novels are also important for the interventions they make into the genre of regionalism itself. Ultimately, *Prairie* and *Caddie* can tell us more just as much about regionalism as regionalism can tell us about *Prairie* and *Caddie*. Wilder, Lane, and Brink are writing not only at the juncture of past and present, of local and national, but in between temporal and geographic regional constructs that scholars tend to view as largely fixed. In crafting Great Plains nostalgic regionalism that eschews the practice of literary tourism for literary homecoming, Wilder and Lane effectively cross a perceived gap between bucolic Eastern touristic regionalisms and the harsh destabilized regionalism of the Western frontier, showing us that regional fiction cannot and should not be easily divided into binaried constructs between nostalgic and anti-nostalgic, hegemonic and anti-hegemonic. While *Caddie*'s regionalism is less blatantly obvious than *Prairie*'s, it similarly denies set binaries by enacting a nationalized project of reunion at the local level. Defying commonly-held precepts of works for children as simple, reductive, or unassuming, these novels perform a dynamic

locomotion, a return to the region forty years after the height of canonical regional fiction, to acknowledge the places and practices of a child's geographically confined and spatially fluid life.

Just as L. Frank Baum used the language and concerns of local color for his gray Kansas prairies and chromatic fantasy scape, dismantling genre boundaries in the process, and just as Frances Hodgson Burnett Wilder produced a translocal space for children in *The Secret Garden*, defying assumptions that locality is inherently insular, Wilder, Lane, and Brink firmly embed their historical works of children's literature within a regionalist tradition, straddling chronologies as well as geographies. They use place, space, and time as discursive platforms, implicitly arguing for the local as an essential facet of the child's learned participation in social dialogue. As Nicola Ansell writes, "it is not *only* locally occurring processes, practices and events that impinge on children's lives," and these authors acknowledge the complex, kinetic relationship between larger political discourses and the everyday interactions children have with their immediate environments. *Prairie* and *Caddie* remind us that regionalism, as a literary genre, does not belong to adult-marketed books alone; writing for children can and does address constructions of local environment. They are important reminders that there are great plains and wide prairies of regionalism, endless gray areas that disturb and provoke anxiety, providing nothing to hide behind.

Chapter 3, in part, has been submitted for publication in *Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture*. The dissertation author was the sole researcher and author of this paper.

Chapter 4:

“Apt to be on any floor at any time”: Localities in New York City Children’s Fiction

“Alphabetically, Architecturally, As a cat, As a gorilla, Botanically, By cab, Historically, Numerically, Ornithologically, Poetically.”

Leonard Marcus, “Ten More Ways to See New York,” in *Storied City*

The localities I have considered to this point are largely depictions of pastoral or homesteading local color that reinforce conventional understandings of locality as inherently rural. However, the local in children’s literature is by no means synonymous with the rural in children’s literature. The city can and does present opportunities for the production of local place. Works for children set in urban spaces increased exponentially throughout the twentieth century as children’s literature publishers developed a greater interest in geographic diversity. More and more landscapes in children’s novels began to reflect the increasing urbanization of the U.S. population. Rather than look back at the nineteenth century, as *Little House on the Prairie* and *Caddie Woodlawn* did in the 1930s with such success, a significant number of mid-century children’s books favor urban depictions of contemporary child environments.

While Los Angeles, Boston, and Chicago have their share of literary representations, New York City is the undeniable center of twentieth-century urban children’s literature, both in terms of production and setting. The vast majority of children’s literature publishing houses are located in New York. Many classic children’s books take place in the city, including Alger’s novels (1867-1899), Elizabeth Enright’s *The Saturdays* (1941), E. L. Konigsburg’s *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967), George Selden’s *The Cricket in Times Square* (1960), Langston

Hughes's *Black Misery* (1969), and multiple works by Walter Dean Myers, among many, many others. New York functions as an accessible urban environment, amenable to dissection and compartmentalization, in which child characters are able to explore their surroundings and challenge pre-defined adult maps. Relatively small in land area, New York City is geographically negotiable in ways that sprawling Los Angeles, London and other major urban centers are not. Children's literature finds a home in New York City not only because New York City is home to nearly all major children's literature publishers in the twentieth century, but because New York City is an ideal urban space in which to set a children's story: filled with opportunities for child access that do not depend on the helping hand—or forbidding hand—of an adult.

In this chapter, I argue that many works of children's literature set in New York City produce it as a specifically local site, rather than as an enormous, incomprehensible collection of people, places, and experience. The city defies its label as massive, inscrutable, and sprawling, instead becoming accessible and manageable through its division into small sections. The three texts I examine here—Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight's *Eloise* (1955), Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1962), and Virginia Hamilton's *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971)—all take place in a localized New York, largely presented through the terms of their child protagonists. Eloise's New York is the Plaza Hotel, and her un-policed negotiation of that environment suggests an agency predicated on class privilege and the accessible locality of a largely closed system. For Fitzhugh's Harriet, New York is her four-block spy route, a carefully mapped course that takes her into alleys and inside dumbwaiters, away from predetermined city paths and the approval of adults and other children. Buddy and Junior, the protagonists of Hamilton's

novel, construct their own microcosm of New York City through negotiating between greater Manhattan and the small world of their “planets”: forgotten basement rooms buried below the streets that serve as shelters for homeless children. All three of these works emphasize the ability of the child to challenge pre-determined environments and resist adult-imposed hegemonies through the construction of heterotopic spaces. While these rooms of their own (and hallways, and alleys) are child-authored within the world of the text, *Eloise* and *Harriet* also serve adult interests in a neat paradox that makes child agency possible while assuaging adult concerns. Far more than rural or suburban spaces, urban spaces are perceived as threatening, a wide, wild space in which child bodies could easily be lost, damaged, or made un-childlike. The prevalence of localized New York City children’s fiction in the mid-twentieth century allows for the pleasures of child agency—children producing local space independent of adult influence—while providing the equivalent of literary GPS through specific descriptions, small spaces, and well-defined environments. The child can act, but adult-authored children’s text show us clearly where the child is, and so the child remains supposedly safe. *Junior Brown*, however, refuses on every level to arrest its child characters, creating localities in multiple sites that are highly permeable. *Eloise* and *Harriet*, two white, upper-class, female children, possess a “safe” agency that never puts them too far outside the reach of adults; *Buddy* and *Junior*, two black, poor, male children, wholly deny adult influence, moving about the streets of the Upper West Side with a fluidity, carelessness, and independence that threatens to move into and through spaces adults cannot reach. All the other texts I consider in this dissertation have been and continue to be wildly popular, best-sellers from the date of their publication through the twenty-first century. *The Planet*

of *Junior Brown*, however, is far less known, less popular, and less studied, despite winning a Newbery Honor award in 1972. The difference, I believe, is partially due to *Junior Brown*'s willingness to propose a geography entirely authored by children, a suggestion that fundamentally challenges adult desires to keep children visible, accessible, and safe.

That I label an urban site as local in the first place puts me outside the definition set by most regionalist scholarship, which tends to equate the terms “local” and “regional” with rural. This scholarship tends towards a binaried model, where the rural is the “true” regional and the city, conversely, becomes the anti-regional: the urban center from which the reader of regional literature wishes to escape. Most present this binary without questioning it. In *Imagining Los Angeles*, David Fine notes that he contextualizes his approach towards a reading of the city as text within paradigms of both urban and regional literature, not allowing for possible intersections between the two. Stephanie Foote similarly argues for a conception of regional writing as a “homeopathic genre [that] seeks to counteract the ills of the urban” (18). While Foote’s reading of regionalist literature accurately acknowledges one of its functions, and a definite reason for its overwhelming popularity in the late nineteenth century, she explicitly divides the urban from the regional, suggesting that regional fiction is always a response to the urban, rather than an urban practice itself. If, however, as Foote argues, the inherent heterogeneity of regionalism frustrates “regional writing’s formal attempt to imagine a homogenous rural past” (17), we might also consider the city—an inherently destabilized space—to be a participant in this productive process of rupture.

Michael Denning provides us with a firmer link between the urban and the region, arguing that what he terms “ghetto pastoral” fiction constitutes an important link between urban naturalism and rural regionalism. This literature, appearing primarily in the 1930s and 40s, interrogates nationalism through deconstructions of what it means to be American, through its focus on ethnic working-class urban neighborhoods. It achieves this through an amalgam of the empirical and the allegorical. Ghetto pastoral fiction connects “naturalism and the pastoral, the slum and the shepherd, [and is] less a form of social realism than a proletarian tale of terror, an allegorical cityscape composed in a pidgin of American slang and ghetto dialect, with traces of old country tongues” (Denning 231). As presented by the ghetto pastoral novel, the ethnic/racialized proletarian neighborhood space presents a kind of regionalism, which Denning briefly acknowledges, without elaboration: “[T]he ghetto novel, whether by black or ethnic writers, was seen as a minor regional form” (237). And again, later: “For the most part, there is little crossing in the ghetto pastoral, and they remain regional novels” (247). Ghetto pastoralism itself constitutes a liminal site between urban fiction and rural regionalist fiction, operating within and using paradigms of both. Denning’s location of the regional within the urban—specifically, a reframing of the region as localized neighborhood or microspace within the city—demonstrates that locality and urbanity are in fact concepts with significant overlap.¹

¹ *The Planet of Junior Brown* arguably falls under Denning’s definition of ghetto pastoral, as a novel that owes a large debt to the ghetto pastoral writings of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, but Virginia Hamilton—born in 1935—was too young to belong to the Popular Front that served as the backbone coalition for ghetto pastoral writing. Nevertheless, *Junior Brown*, like ghetto pastoral fiction, engages with “the ethnic and racial modalities through which the relations of class were lived [and] the recurring obsession with working-class childhood” (240).

In his article “‘New York and yet not New York’: Reading the Region in Contemporary Brooklyn Fictions,” James Peacock argues for Brooklyn as a significant site in contemporary regionalist literature. In this fiction, Brooklyn functions as a local environment invested in transcultural negotiations. Peacock builds on the work of Philip Joseph and Tom Lutz to argue that literary regionalism “has *always* dramatized, to various extents, negotiations between the local and the global” (2). Urban regionalism, as Peacock reads it, is defined through its simultaneous attention to local, immediate identity and community, and to larger perspectives that transcend the specificity of the neighborhood. Scholarship has often defined regionalist fiction through historical categorization, arguing for regionalism as an engagement with the rise of realism and the fall of romanticism. I echo Peacock, however, in emphasizing the importance of reading regionalism outside those conventional strictures. Regionalism is periodized, and means something specific within the context of the late nineteenth century, but the concept also has relevance for literature after the demand for regional fiction faded post-World War I. These children’s texts demonstrate the concerns of regionalism because they each emphasize the significance of locality through explicit detail, while concurrently attending to more abstract, broader concerns regarding the child’s ability to influence, respond to, and construct her own environment. As Tom Lutz notes, the hallmark of regionalism “is its attention to both local and more global concerns, most often achieved through a careful balancing of different groups’ perspectives” (30). In these three urban regionalist texts, child characters challenge or resist the spaces and places that adults have constructed for them, forming alternate local spaces largely within the purview of adult

(writer) influence, satisfying adult desires to keep the child visible and accessible.² All of these desires and tensions co-exist without resolution.

Localized child spaces in New York City children's literature become a way of isolating difference, spaces of otherness "linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life" (Soja 67). In this chapter, I use Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopic spaces to frame my reading of the urban local. Heterotopias are primarily defined by their resistance to social normative spaces: "There are also [places] . . . which are something like *counter-sites*, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites . . . are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (Foucault in Soja 157). As sites that are undeniably real and present in the lives of human beings, yet mirror, distort, or reassemble other sites, heterotopias always function in relation to other locales. Unlike utopias, heterotopias are tangible, existing environments: "a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable" (Foucault 351). There are two primary categories as articulated by Foucault: that of the crisis heterotopia and the heterotopia of deviation. Crisis heterotopias are places designed for individuals in states of distress or transition, such as same-sex boarding schools for adolescents. Heterotopias of deviation are places that house persons deviant from "required norms" (Soja 159), including prisons and mental health facilities. There is an element of chronology to these two categories; Foucault argues that the crisis heterotopia is rapidly being replaced by the

² Importantly, these works also emphasize ideological hierarchies while attempting to play with or dismantle them. Eloise, for example, has the privilege of wandering around the Plaza without restriction because, as a permanent resident of the hotel, she quite literally belongs to that space. *The Planet of Junior Brown's* Buddy Clark, a black, homeless boy, would have quite a different experience in the Plaza than Eloise. In no way do I wish to suggest that all urban regional children's texts demolish adult-imposed hegemonies. The children of Elizabeth Enright's *The Saturdays*, for example, remain largely on designated streets in their traversal of New York City, participating in flâneur-like strolling and observation. Their canvassing of the city does not challenge adult-designed borders, and they do not re-appropriate spaces.

heterotopia of deviation. Significantly, as Soja points out, Foucault does not read these two categories as exhaustive: “Whether these cover all heterotopias is left unclear” (159). Heterotopias are fluid constructs, subject to shifts and changes, “capable of juxtaposing in one real place several different places” (160). A parallel space, heterotopias contain or isolate difference, allowing for heterogeneous movement within the space in opposition or in response to the kinds of movements exterior to the space. They are simultaneously other spaces and spaces made other; they are constructed both by those that live within and those that live without.

I read the child-structured locality within the city as fundamentally heterotopic. The child’s amorphous, complex resistance to adult-constructed place functions as a kind of counter-site, one that has the potential to also contain adult anxieties over locating the child in accessible spaces. This labeling enables us to recognize the extent to which child regions are heterogeneous, fragmented and fluid places: sites that “are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be comfortably poured back into old containers” (Soja 163). Nevertheless, understanding that Foucault’s theory is famously unstable, incomplete, and inconsistent, my reading of heterotopic functions and their delineations in children’s literature departs from Foucauldian categories. The heterotopias of urban regionalist children’s fiction are not specifically crisis heterotopias or heterotopias of deviation: they are heterotopias of access. Within these works of children’s literature, both adults and children participate in the construction of heterotopic sites formed primarily through the agential actions of child characters, in response to adult influence, and in direct violation of adult policies that advocate the containment and restriction of children. The relative proximity of urban local spaces allows for child access, while the accessibility and

specificity of these same places simultaneously allows for adult monitoring. As a heterotopia, child localities are always defined in opposition to sites mediated by adulthood and adult desires, whether or not these localities are ultimately shaped through adult interests or child interests.

Regionalism, as defined by Tom Lutz, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse, has inherent heterotopic potential. This literature constitutes a productively liminal site, through its contestation of both geographic place and discursive space, and through what it means to be included or excluded from community. Although Amy Kaplan and Richard Brodhead, among others, contend that regional sites paradoxically reinforce nationalism, I abstain from binaried definitions in order to consider regionalism as functioning in multiple ways: both hegemonic and anti-hegemonic. These works are fundamentally heterotopic, consisting of potentially productive multiplicities and contradictions. Tom Lutz's definition of regionalism provides us with a clear bridge between the conversations around regionalist literature and heterotopic spaces: regions are a "kind of contrapuntal unresolved [oscillation] between cultural voices and positions" (27-8). Fetterley and Pryse are likewise unwilling to map regional sites as simple or contained geographies: for them, regionalism in action is place as "discursive location" (37). I acknowledge, therefore, the extent to which these textual regions "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that simultaneously makes them both isolated and penetrable" (Soja 161). If, as Soja critiques Foucault, the concept of the heterotopia is too focused on the micro, we might look to regionalism to consider how the micro contains within it deceptively larger multitudes. Ultimately, to read the urban region as potentially

heterotopic is to participate in the troubling of multiple categories: regional, urban, heterotopic and child.

“I am a city child”: *Eloise* and the Plaza Hotel

One of the most famous urban-set children’s books, Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight’s *Eloise* (1955) was immediately popular upon its publication, eventually steamrolling into a cultural phenomenon that would result in multiple sequels and limitless merchandizing. Eloise, a six-year-old girl, lives at the Plaza Hotel in Manhattan with her long-suffering English nanny, known only as Nanny; her “dog that looks like a cat,” Weenie; and her raisin-eating, sneaker-wearing turtle Skipperdee. She narrates her daily routine in great detail, including descriptions of the hotel itself (“There is a lobby which is enormously large/with marble pillars and ladies in it/and a revolving door with [a logo] on it”), the people she encounters in it (“I am a nuisance in the lobby/Mr. Salomone said so/He is the manager”), and her play fantasies (“Saylor is a very large doll and has a hard head and no arms/She was in the most terriblest accident and she bled so hard/she almost choked in the night”). *Eloise* has no linear plot line or arc, but functions instead as a series of narrative snapshots, complete with illustrations. Part of the reason for *Eloise*’s appeal is its protagonist’s delightfully mischievous behavior. She uses elevators as playthings; she adjusts thermostats in hallways; she runs through public rooms performing ballet moves. “There’s so much to do,” she enthuses. “Tomorrow I think I’ll pour a pitcher of water down the mail chute” (65). Contending for *Eloise*’s significance to both the canon of children’s literature and to constructions of the city,

Marie Brenner quotes *The New York Times* children's book editor, Eden Ross Lipson: "Eloise defines New York in the way that Madeline defines Paris."

The relationship Lipson acknowledges between these texts is a rich one, and I begin with it here to frame my discussion as to how *Eloise* functions specifically as a local text rather than an urban story. The kind of place *Eloise* foregrounds diverges greatly from the kind of place we encounter in Ludwig Bemelman's children's classic *Madeline* (1939), despite the extensive similarities between the two stories.³ Considering exactly *how* the former is different from the latter indicates to what extent *Eloise* builds a specifically localized urban space, through its focus on the Plaza rather than a larger Manhattan area. There are some superficial similarities between the texts: both picture books, they have brave heroines who disregard convention, and who live in non-standard home environments with substitute parents. As Lipson points out, both also live in world cities. Where these works diverge, however, is in their representation of child environment. Bemelman shows not only the interior of the "old house in Paris/that was covered in vines," but exterior shots of Paris: famous landmarks and buildings, including Notre Dame de Paris, Zoo de Paris, boats on the Seine, and the Eiffel Tower. Madeline can be said to define Paris because she navigates through Paris; her book takes the reader through its streets, alleys and waterways. On the other hand, *Eloise* stays inside the Plaza Hotel throughout its sixty-five pages, the only depiction of any exterior place on the second page, where the reader sees Eloise saluting the Plaza doorman as she walks up its steps. *Eloise* cannot define New York in precisely the same way as *Madeline* defines

³ A personal visit to the Plaza Hotel in September 2012 revealed that *Madeline* was being sold in the Eloise gift shop alongside *Eloise* picture books.

Paris, since Thompson and Knight limit the spatial representation of “New York” in *Eloise* to the interior of a building. I hesitate to label *Eloise* as a book that defines “New York,” if “New York” is understood to be a collection of the experiences, lives, and encounters of millions of people. However, I will claim that *Eloise* defines a specific kind of localized space within New York. The character of Eloise appropriates her environment for alternative uses contrary to adult interests in ways that gesture towards a defined heterotopia of child access.

Unlike the other two books I consider in this chapter—and unlike any other book in this dissertation—*Eloise* is a picture book, which lends it a dual significance in terms of spatial representation, and challenges any reading that does not recognize the always-present tensions between text and image. In his influential analysis of visually-oriented texts for children, *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children’s Picture Books*, Perry Nodelman observes that “when words and pictures combine, irony emerges from the way in which the incompleteness of each is revealed by the differing incompleteness of the other” (223). This, Nodelman argues, catalyzes a kind of “mutual destruction of words by pictures and pictures by words” (223-4). *Eloise* participates in this destruction, its words often at interesting and playful odds with its images. For example, the short text that accompanies the two-page spread of Eloise’s room is teasingly incomplete: “I have my own room/It has a coat rack which is as large as me” (20). The coat rack is hidden among a number of other notable things strewn about Eloise’s room, nearly all of which are more intriguing to the reader/viewer than a coat rack. We see the bottle of “Liquid Hair Net” worryingly close to the teapot, Eloise’s self-portrait still lying on the floor, with the hand mirror she’s likely used for accuracy propped next to it, and the nails she’s

driven into the bottom of her rocking chair. What this tension of omission achieves for *Eloise* is a positive mutual destruction, where we can observe the way Eloise, as narrator, participates in the troubling of place formation. Her room, according to her limited description, contains only one item worthy of mention: a coat rack. The image, however, inflates the reader/viewer's understanding of what her room contains, suggesting the extent to which environment is concerned with subjective representation. The items Eloise leaves out contribute just as much to her word-based construction of place as the images we observe.

The spatial constructions of *Eloise*, therefore, are not limited to the world within the text, but extended to the layout of the book itself: the organization, size, and situation of the book's illustrations and text. Some illustrations, such as Eloise's room, take up two full pages, pushing the text to the edge of the page. Others are smaller, snapshots of Eloise's movements, presented in presumably linear sequence: Eloise "look[ing] at the ceiling/for a while and think[ing] of a way to get a present/I usually yawn out loud several times" (25). In another two page spread, Eloise informs the reader of her talents. Here, the pictures generally support the text they accompany (although one image, Eloise scrawling her name on a wall, adds another level of impish humor to the simple text, "Write"). However, as Nodelman argues, looking at "words as merely lineal and images as merely spatial is extremely simplistic . . . our understanding of language demands that we find holistic shapes in the sequences of words" (199). The visual spaces *Eloise* creates are not limited to the play between large and small illustrations; its language, and the way Thompson and Knight organize the language on the page, works within a structure not dissimilar to verse. Eloise's repeated refrain, for example, in which she compares

someone else's actions or experiences to her own ("Here's what he likes/Martinis/Here's what I like/Dandelions") achieves its humor in part through its spatiality. "Martinis" and "Dandelions" receiving their own lines lends them an emphasis through contrast.

This interplay between words and differing images evokes a destabilizing multiplicity that challenges simplistic understandings of how children navigate their immediate geographies. Social scientist and human geographer Nicola Ansell describes her field's understanding of child spaces: "children are often viewed as profoundly embedded in their local environments as 'colonizers of small spaces' . . . [they] are seen as both learning the world from the body outwards and also subject to constraints that separate them from a larger and more diverse daily round" (191). However, as Ansell points out, the exclusive focus on the micro-scale is not sufficient; scholarship "must accept the challenge of tackling the macro-scale, structure-based geographies of childhood" (Philo in Ansell, *ibid*). As an urban local text, *Eloise* straddles both the micro and the macro through its textual and visual world, focusing in on intimate spaces—often, depictions of Eloise's body, without context—and spaces that transcend the confines of the text, quite literally. (The fold-out image of Eloise's elevator route, which I discuss later, is perhaps the clearest example of this.) The hallmark of regionalism, as I have previously acknowledged, is the ability to oscillate between categories and perspectives, challenging preconceptions of spatial distinctions such as "interior" and "exterior."

Within the context of traditional regionalist scholarship, labeling the Plaza Hotel as a local place that owes a historical debt to regional literature might seem like somewhat of a leap. The Plaza in no way resembles the environments found in most

regionalist literature; Sarah Orne Jewett's Maine villages, or Willa Cather's prairies, seem completely divergent from the interior of an urban hotel. As Michael Denning and James Peacock suggest, however, the urban local space functions as a microspace within the greater urban area. The Plaza is a localized construct in *Eloise* because it shares with literary regional spaces a commitment to problematizing conceptions of interiority and exteriority. Regionalism is not solely a rural label, nor does it necessarily implicate a specific area. Regionalism is primarily defined by its relationship with the broader space ostensibly exterior to it, and by its engagement with tropes of belonging/exclusion, entrance/exit, appropriation, and movement. In this way, we can read Jewett, for example, as dialoguing with urban literary centers through her positioning of Dunnet Landing as antithetical to Boston; or Cather, posing Hanover, Nebraska in conversation with New York City. Threading through these tropes are implicit power structures—who gets to belong? Who is excluded? Who moves in and out of the region or locale? Who stays inside?—that determine the agents of place/space structure. *Eloise* is a work that falls within the boundaries of regionalist literature because it is primarily concerned with questions of agency, power, place, space, and appropriation. It frames these questions through a specific, detailed site that always already implies broader spaces and constructions: both the city at large and the complex, shifting adult/child relationship.

Eloise creates a heterotopic local space through its depiction of Eloise's environment, in ways that contest simplified categories of interiority and exteriority, among others. This space, however, like much regional fiction, functions in both anti-hegemonic and hegemonic ways. Thompson and Knight foreground possibilities for child agency via Eloise's navigation/construction of her space, while simultaneously

suggesting through detail that Eloise's class privilege allows her that agency. Eloise is only able to run down the hallways with a stick banging against the wall, or help the waiters clear tables at functions, or adjust the thermostats on the 10th floor, because she is a resident of the building. Eloise, who lives in a penthouse in one of mid-century New York's most luxurious hotels, is clearly a child of wealth, with a personal nanny, a tutor, and a mother who moves in lofty social circles: "My mother knows Coco Chanel/She goes to Europe and to Paris/and sends for me if there's some sun" (12). That a state-sanctioned capitalist system affords Eloise her privilege of movement is undeniably one way in which the text implicitly supports traditional power structures. What makes this space fundamentally heterotopic, however, is the way Eloise's contestation of approved behavior opposes the structure within which she's ultimately given silent permission to misbehave. The appeal of *Eloise* is in the child character's appropriation of an "adult" space—a hotel—for purposes that in some way challenge adult-ordered structures of behavior. Importantly, Thompson goes to great lengths to make sure her character never leaves the physical boundaries of the Plaza, and even showcases Eloise's private tutor to explain why Eloise doesn't have to attend school. However, through imaginative work and play, Eloise challenges literal understandings of uses of different rooms, objects and machines. In the final line of the book, Eloise promises that tomorrow she will throw a pitcher of water down the mail chute, her pleasure framed as labor: "Oh my Lord/There's so much to do" (42). The mail chute becomes Eloise's waterway, a kind of aqueduct, simply because she wants it to be.

That Eloise interacts only with adults, rather than with other children, suggests the extent to which her manufactured world responds to an adult-centered environment. Her

movement around the Plaza is a dizzying blend of contestation, negotiation and integration of adult rules and desires. Eloise's primary caregiver, Nanny, provides certain kinds of structure through regular meals and baths, but seems incapable of curtailing Eloise's well-meaning rampages. Philip, her tutor who "goes to Andover" (presumably as a teacher, not as a student), has no control over his pupil, who mimics him mercilessly. We see their interactions depicted in a series of panels that resemble comic strips; Eloise, in each, mimes Philip's serious, exasperated or despairing expressions and movements. The comic layout explicitly signals a playful kind of humor. Eloise textually and visually manufactures a space of study into a space of play, the layout of the page confirming and building upon the tone she's created.

As depicted in some rooms, Eloise is clearly the odd one out. She does not interact in approved ways with her environment, but challenges it, whether silently or through movement. In the "lobby which is enormously large/with marble pillars and ladies in it" (9) she sits under a large table, legs spread in an unmannered position, hands resting on her chin as she observes the scene in front of her. Two older women, presumably members of New York upper class society due to their fancy dress and haughty expressions, chat to one another, unaware that Eloise is watching them. A third woman, alone on a bench next to Eloise's table, stares at Eloise, her expression suggesting surprise and indignation.⁴ In yet another image, a two-page spread, Eloise

⁴ This amalgam of seeing and being seen teases at the idea of *flânerie* popular in other New York-based children's books of the mid-twentieth century. As Eric Tribunella writes, "Children's literature both confirms the possibility of the child *flâneur* and makes use of this figure to contend with the ramifications of modernity" (67). Eloise, unlike some other protagonists of urban children's literature, is not a *flâneuse*, partly because her strolling is limited to the interior of the Plaza rather than the exterior of the city; partly, as well, because others look at her and interact with her. Eloise, however, possesses some aspects of

“run[s] down the hall . . . slomping [sic] my feet against the/woodwork which is very good for scuffing and noise” (17). Four adults peer out of their hotel rooms, clearly interrupted in the middle of their activities (one man is in a towel, with shaving cream still clinging to his face). Eloise’s back is to the viewer as she scampers out of the frame, the stick in her hand “skiddering” against the wall. In the foreground, a disapproving woman looks over her glasses at the skate key Eloise has dropped on the carpet. Lobbies and hallways are not designed for the kinds of observation and play for which Eloise appropriates them. Part of the pleasure of the text for imagined child readers is in the astonished adult reaction to Eloise’s movements or positioning, the adults’ inability to force Eloise to change her behavior, and the vicarious enjoyment the child draws from Eloise’s overt transgressions that seem to have no consequence whatsoever. Eloise seems to be completely in control.

As readers, our experience of the hotel depends entirely on Eloise’s narration. Thompson maps the layout of the Plaza through Eloise’s navigation of it. She takes us past the doorman through the front door, into the lobby, and then inside the elevator, explaining that while she “live[s] on the top floor,” she is “apt to be on any floor at any time” (12). This assertion has support from the image facing it on the opposite page: a two-page, vertical fold-out, overtly interactive diagram of Eloise’s elevator journey that readers are supposed to scan from the bottom of the page up. “For instance,” the text opposite reads, “if I happen to be on the second floor/I just press that button until it comes up and as soon as that/door is open I get in and say ‘5th floor please’” (ibid). The

flânerie, in that her primary occupation seems to be “going about [the hotel] in order to find the things which will occupy [her] gaze and thus complete [her] otherwise incomplete identity” (68).

illustration shows all seventeen floors of the Plaza, with multiple Eloises in frantic motion: entering the elevator, running across one floor, bolting up the stairs, and exiting on another floor. Accompanying the image, the text narrates the image exactly, informing readers that Eloise travels from the second floor to the fifth floor on the elevator, then dashes up the stairs to the eighth floor, then enters the same elevator, riding up to the fifteenth floor. From the fifteenth floor she runs down to the twelfth floor, riding back down in the elevator to the lobby. Finally, from the lobby, she “get[s] into the next elevator and go[es] all the way up” (ibid). For visual assistance, Hilary Knight provides helpful arrows and text markers: BEGIN HERE, one says, at the second floor, and END HERE, another says, at the top floor. The arrows indicate in which direction Eloise moves: up, down or sideways. At the top of the image, the text continues, words nestled next to a preening Eloise, who gazes at her reflection: “Then I get off at the top floor/and look in the mirror at me/ELOISE” (13).

These images sum up *Eloise*'s complex presentation of a child's negotiation of her environment, through their play of tensions between amusement and labor, chaos and control. As commonly used, the elevator is a vehicle for transportation, a expeditious way of getting from one place to another: from the bottom floor to the top, from the lobby to one's suite. Eloise disregards the traditional use of the elevator, instead appropriating it for her own purposes. Within the environment of the Plaza as traditionally understood, there is no reason to run capriciously between floors, and so we might assume that this random movement is summed up by the pleasure Eloise clearly gains from transgressing traditional elevator use. While this transgression is clearly a significant part of this image and its accompanying text, its meanings are about more than pleasure. The detail of

Eloise's play in both text and image, presented particularly through the numerous Eloises running down hallways and stepping into elevators, belies a dismissal of her actions as "simply" play. A child's recreation, Thompson and Knight suggest, might be worthy of specificity and painstaking notation in and of itself; whether Eloise's behavior is to any end other than her own enjoyment is not, for them, the paramount consideration. This route is not a simple one. Through the use of arrows and notations, Knight's illustration indicates that we should expend effort to understand it. Our effort, as readers, overlaps onto Eloise's effort, pointing to the presence of a kind of labor. Although Eloise's trip up and down the elevator and through the hallways of the Plaza is clearly incited by her desire and drive for amusement, these pages require a level of effort, on both the readers' and Eloise's part, that prevents a dismissal of her rounds as "mere" play. Her final act on these two pages is a self-affirmation that we might read as resisting traditional notions of labor output. Eloise's labor has produced what she, ultimately finds most valuable: her own reflection, its worth apparent in the proud printing of her name at the edge of the page: ELOISE.

The environment created through this playful labor is fundamentally heterotopic, encapsulating the seeming paradox of containment and transgression that defines both regionalist literature and Foucault's "other" space. In this moment, Eloise is seemingly bounded in multiple ways: by the confines of the elevator, by the lines marking the different floors of the hotel, by the adults who stop her along her route to chastise or gawk at her, and by the hotel itself, which dictates that she cannot rise any higher than the top floor. Nevertheless, her alternate use of the hotel space, for pleasure rather than transportation or rest, suggests a resistance to containment. The multiple images of Eloise

in constant motion, tumbling along the hallway with her hands raised high and legs in the air support this reading; she cannot be isolated within a single space. The heterogeneity of these contradictions, juxtaposed with the intended use of the Plaza, creates a heterotopic space. Foucault, in his article, notes that he is interested primarily in spaces which represent and respond to the kind of transitions we encounter in *Eloise*:

Through the sets of relationships that define [spaces], one could describe arrangements where one makes a temporary halt: cafes, cinemas, beaches . . . I am only interested in a few of these arrangements: to be precise, those which are endowed with the curious property of being in relation with all the others, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize or invert the set of relationships designed, reflected or mirrored by themselves. (24)

The Plaza functions simultaneously as a space that constitutes a “temporary halt” and a space that, for Eloise, constitutes permanency. Notably, Foucault reads the hotel as a potential heterotopia, specifically the honeymoon hotel, which serves a particular purpose as a “place of . . . nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers” (25). We cannot say this about the Plaza Hotel, which almost from the moment of its opening has been a place of significance for New York City, and which certainly, in 1955, had achieved landmark status. The honeymoon hotel, for Foucault, is less geography than theory, and in *Eloise*, the Plaza functions heterotopically *and* as the space the heterotopia counters: Eloise’s appropriated environment that jostles against the site’s intended use. The Plaza, for *Eloise*, is both geography and theory, participating in a troubling of the established relationship between hotel and occupant, home and child, separating the planned practices of guests, managers, and residents from the inverted practices Eloise performs. That Eloise ends her travels up and down elevators and stairwells by staring into the mirror at her own image is effectively an opening rather than closure, an

extension of this heterotopia she's created. The mirror, Foucault writes, functions simultaneously in reality (the connection of one's reflection to one's environment) and creates an unreal space (a projection of one's self where one is not), participating in the perpetuation of heterotopic divisions. Through her actions, Eloise continually draws attention to the discrepancy between the site of *the* hotel and the counter-site of *her* hotel.

While we never leave the confines of the Plaza itself, Eloise's behavioral transgressions perennially point towards the dismantling of borders. *Eloise* is in conversation with the world outside the Plaza, not only through its many references to figures like Coco Chanel, places like Paris, other hotels like the Waldorf-Astoria, but also through Eloise's unapologetic refusal to use spaces in the ways adults intend her to use them. We might read *Eloise* as an insular book due to its exclusive location inside the Plaza, much as we might read other regional texts as "feed[ing] the fantasy of a hermetic community, sealed off against the corrosive effects of modernity" (Joseph 3). Although no one can accuse *Eloise* of being anti-modern, it certainly gives the appearance of isolation. Eloise does not have to come into contact with other places and spaces, and has her needs met; we might say *Eloise* is, in many respects, dismissive of the corrosive effects of capitalism. However, although *Eloise* lacks an effective capitalist critique, through its explicit wish to provide its child readers with the pleasures of moneyed fantasy, it constitutes an effective affirmation of a certain kind of privileged child agency. "A defining limit," Philip Joseph writes of regionalist literature, "will always differentiate a community, but that border can be easily imagined in an adaptive form, one that allows for . . . the movement of people and ideas into and out of the community" (6). Eloise's willingness and ability to reappropriate the Plaza Hotel as her playspace—as a site that

primarily exists to provide *her* pleasure—is an effective resettlement of the border between adult structure and child response. Despite the best efforts of *Eloise*'s adults, Eloise challenges hierarchies of adulthood and childhood, thereby creating a local site that problematizes the practice of defining limits.

“I do not go out to PLAY, I go out to WORK!”: *Harriet the Spy*'s Routes

Louise Fitzhugh's 1964 classic middle grade novel, *Harriet the Spy*, shares some elements in common with *Eloise*, among them their mid-twentieth century publication date, their setting in New York City, and their precocious, adult-defying, privileged, memorable heroines. Like Eloise, Harriet similarly constructs her environment through a negotiation of adult-regulated spaces. Unlike Eloise, however, Harriet is able to do this outside her enclosed home environment. In the pages that follow, I read *Harriet* for the way its main character constructs local place, building an accessible environment in which she gains access to the private lives of adults. If Eloise's locality is the Plaza Hotel, Harriet's is her spy route, a series of stops that include the dumbwaiter of a private home, an alleyway outside a grocery store, and the roof of a rooming house. Harriet's spy route is fundamentally heterotopic, forming a locality that explicitly rejects adult intrusion into Harriet's life while simultaneously creating a kind of panopticon that allows Harriet to intrude on adults without their knowledge. Although the child is traditionally a subject of adult visual consumption, Harriet subverts that trope, becoming the one who consumes adults. Her work, as the title of the section indicates, is her labor rather than her play, indicating that Harriet takes seriously her commitment to obtaining physical and social agency through negotiation of a local, child-defined space.

Throughout its existence, children's literature criticism has considered to what extent child characters are agential figures, capable of defying, appropriating or reasserting adult-determined desires. For many years, scholarship filtered this discussion through a post-colonialist lens. In his recent book *The Hidden Adult*, Perry Nodelman examines some of the parallels between an Orientalist colonialism and childhood, noting that the Orientalist and the adult are both outside the orientalized other/childhood; Orientalists/adults speak about and for the other, who are presumed not to be able to speak about themselves. Importantly, however, Nodelman notes that the parallel has limits. Though the constructions of childhood created by adults to justify their desires are real and important to analyze, the child's need to be protected and taken care of in some ways is certainly legitimate. With similar care, Marah Gubar signals that the colonial reading of childhood is overly pessimistic and lacking in nuance. She proposes a model of reading children's literature that simultaneously acknowledges "the tremendous power that adults and their texts have over young people, while still allowing for the possibility that children—immersed from birth in a sea of discourse—can nevertheless navigate through this arena of competing currents in diverse and unexpected ways" (33). Harriet navigates through the competing currents of adult discourse by constructing a local place she controls. Harriet is certainly not a colonized figure, precluded from that category by her racial and class privilege. Nevertheless, Harriet's negotiation and understanding of place depend significantly on her resistance to adult-imposed hierarchies that attempt to dictate the way she moves and interacts with others.

Fitzhugh's novel opens with a scene that neatly captures the engagement with place to come: Harriet, sitting in the mud of her courtyard outside her Upper East Side

house, shows her friend Sport how to play a game she's invented called Town. "Now over here next to this curve in the mountain we'll put the filling station," she tells him, and Sport responds indignantly that the 'mountain' is "nothing but an old tree root. Whaddya mean, a mountain?" (4). Fitzhugh extends this scene for several pages, allowing Harriet the textual space to explain the stories she's created for the people in her town. Each of Harriet's fictional characters exist in specific physical places: "'Dr. Jones is delivering a baby . . . Here is the hospital, the Carterville General Hospital.' She pointed to the other side of town. Sport looked at the left root" (6). This is Harriet's play, as indicated by the very first sentence of the book ("Harriet was trying to explain to Sport how to play Town"). Harriet's play, however, is not so very different from what Harriet will later identify as her work. Town is an adult world, and Harriet's narration of its events, in present tense, place her in the role of an observer rather than a creator. "Here's what happens," she informs Sport, before launching into a long story about the robbery of Mr. Hanley, the gas station owner, and the birth of Mrs. Harrison's "ugly" baby girl. Acting as a precursor to Harriet's spy route, Town exists as a kind of local microcosm itself, its permeability subject entirely to Harriet's whims. We might read this as the imaginative world of a child—which, of course, it is—but placed in context with Harriet's spying, Town blurs the line between inventive play and structured labor. Harriet controls Town, and while she does not control the lives of the people on her spy route, she controls the reader's access to them, putting Harriet in a position of some agency.

Harriet and Sport's game of Town is interrupted by Harriet's nurse, Ole Golly, who informs the two children without introduction that she intends to "take [them] somewhere. It's time you began to see the world. You're eleven years old and it's time

you saw something” (8-9). Harriet, feeling a little guilty because “she had seen a lot more than Ole Golly thought she had,” consents readily, and informs Sport that “Ole Golly always has good places” (9). Fitzhugh moves directly from the microcosm of Town to the introduction of “the world” as viewed by Ole Golly, these two ideas in tension with one another, suggesting that beyond Harriet’s experience lies sets of relations she has yet to comprehend. Importantly, Harriet’s syntax signals how intrinsic Ole Golly is to this process of discovery: Ole Golly does not simply *know* good places, she *has* them, indicating a relationship where place is only accessible through Ole Golly. Already, Harriet’s control over place contrasts with Ole Golly’s apparent control over place, the child’s perception and agency shadowed by the adult who contains multitudes. Harriet observes, but Ole Golly surrounds.

The three of them take the subway to the home of Ole Golly’s mother in Far Rockaway, Queens, where Ole Golly informs Harriet that she’s “brought [her] here because [she’s] never seen the inside of a house like this. Have you ever seen a house that has one bed, one table, four chairs, and a bathtub in the kitchen?” Harriet pretends that she hasn’t, because she doesn’t want to give away what she’s seen on her spy route, but her fascination is not with the small size of Mrs. Golly’s house. Rather, she’s astonished by, as Ole Golly puts it, “a woman who never had any interest in anyone else . . . nor in any way of life, but has lived her whole life in this room, eating and sleeping and waiting to die” (18). Ole Golly, Harriet notes after this observation, “was acting very strangely indeed. She seemed . . . was she angry? No, not angry. She seemed sad” (19). Similar to Harriet’s earlier comment about Ole Golly having good places, Ole Golly’s description of her mother suggests an expansiveness shunned by the subject of the sentence. In a novel

filled with sad moments, this description is one of the most heartbreaking. It reveals the extent to which a small place is capable of containing something of great emotional significance, as even Harriet, who has difficulty understanding adult emotions, is capable of discerning. The paradox is extensive: Ole Golly takes Harriet beyond the region she knows, out into “the world,” contained within Ole Golly and simultaneously represented by her mother, who lives alone inside a single room. This first chapter troubles a binaried conception of “large” and “small” place and space, suggesting that neither can be firmly fixed.

Out of this context, Fitzhugh introduces readers to Harriet’s spy route, leading into the activity itself through a careful, detailed, one-page description of Harriet’s outfit (blue jeans, a hooded sweatshirt, a belt to carry her spy’s tools, and a pair of lens-free black-rimmed glasses, “because she thought they made her look smarter”). Harriet’s spy route, as she explains to Sport in the first chapter, consists of four primary stops: the private home of Mrs. Agatha K. Plumber, a wealthy woman bedridden by choice; the grocery owned by the Dei Santi family; the Robinsons, a couple who never “seem to do a blessed thing” (66); and Harrison Withers, who lives alone in a small apartment with twenty-six cats. Harriet does not directly indicate to the reader her reasons for these choices, although accessibility is an important factor. Mrs. Plumber’s house is, she notes, especially dangerous, as Harriet’s only access is through a dumbwaiter just barely big enough to contain her. Notably, Harriet’s child body is what enables her to spy on Mrs. Plumber. Childhood, in *Harriet the Spy*, is an asset to learning about adults, rather than a detriment, upending traditional assumptions that being a child prevents one from accessing adult lives.

Harriet keeps detailed observations of those on her spy route, again returning to the previously noted paradox of small spaces/places defying closure. Mrs. Plumber and the Robinsons are clear satires of wealthy, directionless society, and Harriet is not impressed with either of them. “IT’S JUST WHAT OLE GOLLY SAYS,” she writes while watching Mrs. Plumber, revisiting the one person in her life who contains “good places.” “WHEN PEOPLE DON’T DO ANYTHING THEY DON’T THINK ANYTHING, AND WHEN THEY DON’T THINK ANYTHING THERE’S NOTHING TO THINK ABOUT THEM” (45). The supposedly “perfect” Robinsons receive similar scorn: “IF THEY’RE SO GREAT WHY DO THEY JUST SIT THERE ALL DAY STARING AT NOTHING? THEY COULD BE CRAZY AND NOT EVEN KNOW IT” (68). Intriguingly, three of the four households Harriet observes—the only exception the working-class De Santi family—lack nearly any action whatsoever, redirecting the emphasis of the scene back onto Harriet’s observations. What matters in these miniature panopticons is not the desires or motivations of the characters being watched, but how Harriet translates what she notices into writing. Harriet, as the above excerpts suggest, extends the physical region of her spy route into the theoretical space of human frailty, extracting generalities from her specific surveillance. She grows paradoxically by inserting herself into small places.

Harriet the Spy is a form of regionalism not because it resembles, in any obvious way, the regionalism of Jewett, Cather, Twain or Chesnutt, but because it slices out a specifically defined microcosm within the city at large, and troubles our understanding of the literal and theoretical boundaries of that locality. The delineation of Harriet’s spy route is at once specific and vague. We know that Harriet lives on Manhattan’s East 87th

Street, and that the first stop on her route, Mrs. Plummer's house, is "around the corner" (42). The De Santi grocery is on York Avenue, which intersects E. 87th St, although Fitzhugh does not inform the reader what block of 87th and what block of York. The Robinsons live on 88th Street. (There is no mention of the location of Harrison Withers's apartment building.) This paradoxically undefined precision has the effect of rooting the reader in a mapped setting, while simultaneously remaining coy about where, exactly, these buildings are supposed to be. As in traditional regionalist literature, which often values tensions between specificity and generality, local and global, *Harriet* offers a precise lens with blurred edges. The duality emphasizes the text's fondness for offering exact observations while remaining vague about what those observations might do for Harriet or for the reader. Harriet knows, for example, from watching her teacher in the grocery store checkout line purchase a can of tuna, a single can of diet cola, and a pack of cigarettes, that she "doesn't want to live like Miss Whitehead" (32). Fitzhugh provides specific details—the three items—but allows them to exist without clear context, only indicating through Harriet's discomfort that the tuna, cola, and cigarettes somehow indicate an undesirable, lonely life. Adulthood, in *Harriet*, is the strangest locality, and one into which Harriet enters constantly without fully understanding its parameters or topography.

In her writing on child geographies, Nicola Ansell points out the necessary tensions between acknowledging the ways children are spatially restricted, and allowing for the realities of their spatial mobility. "Too often," she writes, "[the terms] local, concrete and agency are conflated into an acceptable focus for research, in opposition to a global, abstract or structuralist perspective that is viewed with suspicion as too 'distant'

from real children” (194). Harriet suggests the potential for reconciliation of these perspectives, between the child’s limitations and possibilities, both emotional and physical. She foregrounds the child’s local, agential movements through explicit detail, while simultaneously raising larger questions about the child’s ability to enter into more global, expansive spaces. Harriet observes, but she has trouble understanding what she sees, and that tension between particular scrutiny and theoretical knowledge is, in large part, what defines the shifting structure of her local environment.

What Harriet discovers on her routes prompts more questions for her than answers, suggesting that close surveillance does not necessarily earn easily definable knowledge. On one of her final routes, she observes Harrison Withers, the owner of twenty-six cats, sitting alone in his apartment, his cats missing. Harriet is astounded: “They got him, she thought. They finally got him” (164). Her notes are similarly mournful: “DOES EVERYBODY LOOK THAT WAY WHEN THEY HAVE LOST SOMETHING? I DON’T MEAN LIKE LOSING A FLASHLIGHT. I MEAN DO PEOPLE LOOK LIKE THAT WHEN THEY HAVE LOST?” (ibid). Her question ends a chapter and hangs over the events of the following pages. Mrs. Plummer’s maid discovers Harriet in the dumbwaiter, exposing her to Harriet’s shame and humiliation, and Harriet’s friends find her notebook, reading her often cruel and incisive observations about them. The reverberations of Harriet’s question, like those of Ole Golly’s statement on her mother’s life, extend beyond their obvious meanings. Harriet wants to know what it means to have a misplaced life, to sit alone, as Harrison Withers does, without connections to anything else living, an unanswerable question with heavy implications. Fitzhugh’s choice of a first name for this minor character is significant. Harrison stands

in for Harriet, the personification of her fear that without Ole Golly—fired at this point by Harriet’s negligent parents for negligence—Harriet’s lost more than her mother-figure. She’s *lost*. While this particular comment is one of Harriet’s darker observations, it points towards a general trend in the novel where Harriet uses the locality she’s created as an entry point into understanding human nature. As in traditional regionalist literature, physical place becomes an essential vehicle for communicating the intricacies of social space.

While *Harriet* and *Eloise* are both regionalist texts, their treatment of child agency is not identical, due both to their protagonist’s difference in age and the differing relationship Harriet and Eloise have with their caretakers. Eloise physically remains inside her environment, playing with conventions of hotel life in a way that subverts how a hotel is traditionally used, Harriet has a kind of agency her predecessor does not. Much of this is due to Harriet’s age, clearly more advanced than Eloise’s, but a large part of it results from Ole Golly’s permissiveness. Eloise’s Nanny curtails Eloise’s movement, catching her for lessons, attempting to reinsert her into normative behavior, while Ole Golly explicitly encourages Harriet’s spying, at least for the first three-quarters of the text. “Ole Golly says,” Harriet explains to her family’s perennially aghast cook, “find out everything you can cause life is hard enough even if you know a lot” (37). In the absence of her parents, who give no indication of understanding their daughter or her interests, Ole Golly acts as both catalyst for Harriet’s intense curiosity and anchor for her insecurities, providing her with observations that frame Harriet’s understanding of what she sees. “Ole Golly says” is repeated many, many times throughout the text, usually as a kind of citation for Harriet’s statements; if Ole Golly says it, it must be true. Although

Harriet's locality is largely heterotopic, contesting hierarchies that attempt to exclude child access, the way Harriet shapes her locality is partially dependent upon her relationship with Ole Golly. Ole Golly has "great places," and is, in many ways, the vehicle for Harriet's discoveries, through both her permissiveness and through her encouraging *bòn móts*. Although Eloise's agency is predicated on defying Nanny's instructions, Harriet's agency, in large part, stems from Ole Golly's encouragement. *Harriet the Spy* allows its protagonist to create her own map, but it relies in important ways on the wisdom of an adult to reassert what it considers to be its truth.

Ole Golly implicitly reinforces an adult-child hierarchy through her considerable influence on Harriet's spying, but her advice to Harriet at the end of the novel subverts traditional understandings of how adults are supposed to instruct children. Harriet, devastated by Ole Golly's absence and the shunning of her peers, receives a letter from her former nanny, who informs her that as a result of Harriet's notebook's discovery, "you are going to have to do two things, and you don't like either one of them: 1) You have to apologize. 2) You have to lie . . . Little lies that make people feel better are not bad" (277-78). This advice is fundamentally at odds with the predictable didacticism of many mid-century children's books. The lesson is one of survival, not morality. In the process of building her locality and collecting her observations, Harriet loses her footing, only managing to regain it with the help of the single adult who's provided her with support. That this adult encourages her to lie is yet another way in which *Harriet* challenges binaried conceptions of what adults should do for children, and how children should respond to adults. This intentional failure of definitional distinction blurs boundaries between right and wrong, good and bad in ways that echo the text's hazy

distinctions between play and work, specificity and generality, small physical places and expansive emotional spaces.

Like *Eloise*, *Harriet* manufactures a heterotopia through spatial contrast, but *Harriet's* heterotopia is the province of many children, problematizing a reading of singular “child” space. “The heterotopia,” Edward Soja writes, “is capable of juxtaposing in one real place several different spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible or foreign to one another” (160). Foucault’s examples of these places include the cinema, or the oriental garden, or world’s fairs. *Harriet's* navigation and framing of her spy region is similarly composed of multiplicities, a patchwork of adult and child humanity. While I have suggested previously that child localities in children’s literature do not easily map onto Foucault’s criteria for heterotopias of crisis or heterotopias of deviation, *Harriet* gestures towards the latter heterotopic structure. Heterotopias of deviation require the removal of agency from the subject, placing her in a space without necessarily obtaining her consent (the rest home, the hospital). *Harriet's* locality ultimately invokes a stigma of abnormality, and provokes the conditions under which she loses agency. So far, I have focused solely on the physicality of *Harriet's* specific spy route through her Upper East Side neighborhood, and her power over the framing of that route. However, the other, dominant aspect of *Harriet's* spying—her notes on her friends—manufactures a heterotopia that both includes and transcends the physical, that simultaneously showcases and hobbles her agency. *Harriet's* observations of her friends are an integral part of her spy route, her labor, and result in the construction of another kind of heterotopic place: not the child environment made out of adult sites, but a place of deviancy, formed when *Harriet's* friends separate from and ostracize her.

The old British idiom “sent to Coventry” takes the concept of being ignored or ostracized and gives it spatial dimensions: at the time of the phrase’s invention, Coventry was an actual town. Although those words do not appear in *Harriet the Spy*, we see similar spatial dimensions of Harriet’s ostracizing by her friends through the event’s clear relationship with her spy route. On their discovery of her notebook, the others form “a little knot” and refuse “to let her near them” while they read aloud from her book. “Harriet,” her friend Janie says quietly, “go over there on that bench until we decide what we’re going to do to you” (182). Physical separation parallels emotional separation. Harriet, used to cramped slots and climbing rooftops, notes with pain that she has “never been in a worse position” (183). If heterotopias of deviation are spaces in which “individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed,” than Harriet, post-discovery, finds herself in a heterotopia of sorts, her behavior marked through its discovery as fundamentally unacceptable. Child ostracizing is not a literal place with borders or walls, but *Harriet* emphasizes, over and over again, its very real spatiality. School becomes torment. Harriet writes, “THEY ARE OUT TO GET ME. THE WHOLE ROOM IS FILLED WITH MEAN EYES” (188). Even outside school, the exclusion continues, as Harriet discovers when she intrudes on a meeting at bossy Rachel Hennessey’s home: “They were building a *house!* Incredible. But there they were. Everyone was rushing around with tools and wood and there was the semblance of a house emerging right in front of her . . . [S]he saw with amazement that [the sign on its front] read **The Spy Catcher Club**” (213, 24). Harriet’s heterotopia of deviance is marked not by her inclusion within it, but her exclusion; she cannot be a part of a spy catcher club because she is the reason for its existence. Fitzhugh spatializes Harriet’s

torment just as she spatializes her spy labor. Having once fit into small spaces, she finds them now closed to her.

Her emotional survival, therefore, depends on extricating herself from this deviation through reinserting herself within her social world. In the final pages of the book, Harriet meets with Sport and Janie, who she observes walking slowly towards her:

They were so far away that they looked like dolls. They made her think of the way she imagined the people when she played Town. Somehow this way she could see them better than she ever had before . . . She made herself walk in Sport's shoes, feeling the holes in his socks rub against his ankles. She felt what it would feel like to have freckles and yellow hair like Janie, then funny ears and skinny shoulders like Sport . . . (299)

The game of Town has been absent from the narrative since the first chapter, but Fitzhugh resurrects it for her final paragraphs, reminding us that for Harriet, observation comprises both play and work. Although Harriet's desire to walk in Sport's shoes or have Janie's complexion seems to be an empathic connection, Harriet inserts herself in their bodies not with the intention of understanding them, their needs, or their anger at her, but with the desire to regain a sense of control. Harriet has complete command over the placed structure of Town; she has little over her friends. Her reimagining of Sport and Janie as fundamentally hers, inside her body, is also an attempt at removing herself from the heterotopia of deviation—and back into a heterotopia of access—through reconstituting the boundaries of physical space. “OLE GOLLY WAS RIGHT,” she writes, as Sport and Janie walk towards her. “SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO LIE” (300). Harriet remains wholly inside a heterotopic space even as she walks off the final page with Sport and Janie. Her seeming acceptance back into the social circle is troubled by the fact of her playacting, which constitutes a kind of counter-site, or resistance, within

the child social space. Although she has learned to mask some aspects of her deviant behavior, the borders of Harriet's new world are not so different from those of her old one: defined primarily by ambiguous resolutions and blurred distinctions.

Rubbing Too Hard Against the Dark: The Planets of *Junior Brown*

The two books I have examined so far in this chapter effectively show how child locality plays a significant role in New York children's literature. As texts featuring white, female, able upper-class protagonists, however, they neglect important ideological issues inherent in questions around child mobility. Eloise and Harriet's agency is born primarily out of curiosity, rather than necessity. They explore their environments and create regional constructs simply because this process pleases them, and their racial and class privilege grants them that time and luxury. In Virginia Hamilton's 1971 middle grade novel, *The Planet of Junior Brown*, we encounter two black, male, and poor child characters, Buddy Clark and Junior Brown, whose negotiation of place is a very real labor of survival. Both characters have deep relationships with the Upper West Side, navigating streets with an ease that indicates their easy familiarity with the city's geography. While Junior lives with his mother in an apartment, Buddy is homeless, and this transiency produces a textual instability around regional identification that both *Eloise* and *Harriet the Spy* lack. Eloise's locality is her home, Harriet's locality includes her home, but Buddy's locality is, for him, about the impossibility of home, the volatile, ceaseless slippage between self and spaces, the body and its places. In an attempt to make a functional living environment for himself and for others whom the system has overlooked, Buddy organizes groups of homeless boys of color and sets them up in the

basements of abandoned buildings, sites he calls “planets.” These planets function as the consummate child-authored heterotopias, counter-sites that jostle against the normative structures of school and home. In *The Planet of Junior Brown*, the divisions between place, space and body are murky ones, fashioning a regional space that resists easy borders. It incorporates streets and routes that others recognize, but it goes around and below these routes, too. This produces a region that—unlike those created by Eloise and Harriet—is syncopated, patched together, not geographically solid. Buddy’s region requires a map that social institutions will not recognize. Hamilton’s novel, therefore, reconstitutes notions of hierarchical geography in a truly radical way, never allowing adult interests to regain control. It resists hegemonies that require neat categorical separations.

This messy, productive rupture begins with Hamilton’s establishment of a theoretical framework that informs the rest of *Junior Brown*. Buddy, Junior, and the school janitor, Mr. Pool, meet in a forgotten room in the school basement, and discuss a model of the solar system that hangs above their heads: “The planets . . . were suspended from metal rods which ran along spherical tracks attached to the ceiling. They were translucent plastic spheres lighted from within by tiny Christmas bulbs of red, yellow and blue” (2). Buddy has skipped classes in order to build the model with Mr. Pool, and the two of them have fashioned an extra planet, “a stupendous mass [that] claimed a powerful hold on a green, spinning earth,” the planet of Junior Brown (4). “Like yourself,” Mr. Pool informs Junior, “astronomers were amazed one morning to discover a new ten-planet solar system right where the nine-planet one had been the morning before. Our earth was . . . trapped in the orbit of a fantastic planet known as Junior Brown”

(ibid). At first, this seems like good-humored play, a bid to include the shy, overweight boy who immediately retreats inside himself whenever confronted with stress or anxiety, but Buddy and Mr. Pool seriously discuss the physics of adapting a nine-planet solar system to include a tenth one, adding a band of thirty asteroids to establish gravitational equilibrium. “Heavenly science demonstrates that nature is the same everywhere,” instructs Mr. Pool. “Not space, nor light nor any of the others can be measured alone, but only in relation to one or more of the others” (15-6).

The physics of interdependency applies not only to the solar system, but to Buddy and Junior’s navigation of their complex social, temporal, racial, and classed geography. Junior’s body is a planet, a planet with considerable weight and influence, one that figures prominently in the system despite its invisibility to others. The planet of Junior Brown is not on any map of the sky but that of Mr. Pool and Buddy, and its pull significant, paramount, yet unknown to anyone else. In lending twenty pages to intensive discussion of the planet of Junior Brown, the conditions under which it might exist, and its connection to other parts of the universe, all within a hidden, dark room in a school basement, Hamilton constructs her first multi-faceted, layered heterotopia, indicating to readers how the production of alternative, child-authored environments in subsequent pages might be possible. This is not an area to be mapped, but rather an intensely complicated space that, through its child inhabitants, actively participates in the process of mapping.

Returning to Foucault, who divides heterotopic space into two categories, “crisis heterotopias” and “heterotopias of deviation,” we see that the school basement partially

fulfills criteria for both.⁵ It is a forbidden place, much like the crisis heterotopias Foucault argues are part of a “so-called primitive society,” a place outside of the norm for those in a state of crisis, a place of “nowhere . . . without geographical markers.” The school basement is nowhere, not on anyone’s map, much like Mr. Pool and Buddy’s solar system; in fact, Mr. Pool has created a false wall in the back of an apparent broom closet, and “only the three of them knew how to move one side of the wall” (1-2). Buddy and Junior are exceptionally brilliant boys failed by an overloaded and underachieving school system, and this hidden room is, for them, a response to the crisis of exclusion, a chance to provide them with an education they will not receive from traditional institutions. The room is also therefore a heterotopia of deviation, a space for those excluded from mainstream society. Marginalization is a crisis; simultaneously, being black and poor, in a society that privileges whiteness and financial agency, is a deviation. In the amnesiac aftermath of systemic failure, Mr. Pool, Buddy, and Junior have the opportunity to create their own charts, their own worlds, their own systems.

Hamilton’s heterotopia, however, refuses to stay within Foucault’s binaried distinctions, favoring border crossings and boundary blending. Mr. Pool and Buddy discuss the theory of relativity, emphasizing that neither space, nor light, nor time, can be measured or understood by itself, but only in relation to others. This theoretical framework, juxtaposed with the mapping of worlds onto bodies, the child as planet (and later, the basement as planet), signals the novel’s willingness to trouble isolated definitions and constructs without privileging traditional precepts of physics. Space

⁵ I have argued elsewhere in this chapter that Foucault’s categories do not exhaust my reading of potential heterotopic spaces. However, the school basement in *Junior Brown* effectively demonstrates what Foucault does not articulate in detail: that spaces of crisis can also be spaces of deviation, and that this overlap is potentially productive in indicating that heterotopias are shifting sites of potential creativity.

cannot be understood by itself because the comprehension of it entirely depends upon a network of necessities outside the tacit norm. *Junior Brown* re-conceptualizes forgotten basement rooms as the conditions under which new families form. Light cannot be understood by itself because its implied inverse, “dark,” has multiple significations for these children. The homeless boys of *Junior Brown* live in the dark of basements, in the dark of their skin, and Hamilton emphasizes, again and again, that to consider one is inherently to consider another: “To be afraid of the dark is to be afraid of Buddy Clark” (68). Time, too, is relative, and becomes as much mapped onto the child’s body as the child’s body is mapped onto place and space. Buddy, as the leader of his planet, is a “Tomorrow Billy”: less a name than a title for the boy who, when leaving the basement for the outside world, is asked by his group, “Tomorrow, Billy? Will we see you again tomorrow night?” The first Tomorrow Billy is long gone, but the name stays, and functions in the basement dark as a promise that the space is penetrable, that movement between is possible, that a future of some sort still exists. Buddy Clark is a child and a future. Junior Brown is a child and a planet. These children are large; they contain multitudes.

As Eric Tribunella points out in his analysis of *Junior Brown*, one of the central issues of the novel is “seeing and being seen” (86).⁶ He notes that while Junior enjoys seeing others, being seen is an act of agony for him, due to his obesity. Buddy, however, is able to “blend into the city . . . avoiding the reciprocal gaze of the state agencies” (87). This, Tribunella argues, indicates the extent to which Buddy “can move around the city

⁶ Susan Louise Stewart notes that Hamilton’s novel explicitly invokes Ralph Ellison’s 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, not only through its investment in visibility, race, and class, but in the similarities between their protagonists’ environments. Ellison’s *Invisible Man* also lives in a basement (188).

freely . . . Buddy more successful as the child flâneur than is Junior” (ibid). Hamilton describes in detail Buddy’s process of navigation, of seeing and being seen:

So far Buddy had acted his part to perfection. People noticed him – ticket agents, travelers – with that momentary interest people in cities reserve for one another. In one sidelong glance, they had discerned that Buddy was going someplace. He was black. He looked to be maybe eighteen or nineteen but maybe he was younger. He wore tennis shoes. He had a paper, he was smoking and he was sober. No trouble. Just a black kid going home after working in some kitchen somewhere. I am harmless, Buddy thought. I am nothing at all. (88-9)

Tribunella believes that this passage and others suggest Buddy is a child flâneur. While Buddy certainly displays some of the characteristics of a flâneur, as someone who moves through the crowd relatively incognito, that comparative invisibility depends entirely on the region he’s constructed for himself. If the flâneur can “see the world, be at the centre [sic] of the world, and yet . . . remain hidden from the world” (Baudelaire 9), Buddy’s ability to see and refuse being seen is highly contingent upon the particularity of region. Remove Buddy from 79th and Broadway, and let him spy in Harriet M. Welsch’s neighborhood on East 87th Street, or have him run up and down the hallways of the Plaza Hotel like Eloise, and his color and class in those contexts means that his flânerie disintegrates immediately. Buddy can only remain hidden from the world when that world is one which permits or tolerates his presence. In the above passage, Buddy *is* seen, is assessed, and is dismissed; he’s allowed passage without comment or interference because he poses no immediate threat.

Importantly—and Tribunella acknowledges this—Kristen Bartholomew Ortega points out that the traditional model of the flâneur cannot be sustained in a post-WWII American city defined by its racial, gender and class differences. Flânerie must be

understood as a contingent process: “It is unlikely that an upper-class, white dilettante is going to blend into the crowd of the South Side” (140). However, I still hesitate to label Buddy as a flâneur without heavy qualifiers: escaping notice is a fundamental part of flânerie, and perception is at the heart of Buddy’s regional construction. The network of planets he helps maintain is an invisible construction on the surface, carried out in the dark, but these sites are primarily a vehicle for making the unseen seen. The planets provide neglected children with resources, teaching them how to fend for themselves. When Buddy moves from planet to planet, crossing the streets of the Upper West Side, creating a map not on any official ledger, he also participates in the process of visibility. Any definition of him, therefore, as “hidden from the world” is problematic and incomplete. Even if flânerie is contingent, we cannot accurately understand Buddy’s navigation of his region without acknowledging that his blending is an essential part of ensuring the children in his care are, on some level, perceptible.

This refusal to adhere to any given label, to remain uncomfortably in the gray regions between black and white, to reject traditional understandings of flânerie in the re-mapping of city space, defines the construction of region in *The Planet of Junior Brown*. In her reading of the novel’s critique of social systems, Naomi Lesley observes that Buddy “eschew[s] safety and security and the trappings of power they produce” in order to castoff the hold of traditional hierarchies. “Ensuring safety,” she writes, “would mean replicating the kind of standardization Buddy is trying to avoid . . . although [he] challenges the accepted systems . . . the more profound critique is that he refuses to build his own system in the same way” (141-2). Buddy’s system is one that recognizes the inadequacy of racist institutionalized social structures and proposes workable, if still

flawed alternatives. As James Peacock comments, “it is frequently the very presence of a colonizing other which heightens awareness of regional identity in the first place” (4). Region in *Junior Brown*, however, is not simply heightened as a result of colonizing practices; rather, it is produced and generated. It is decentralized not only in theory, but in physical practice. It does not resemble the Plaza Hotel with its sturdy walls, or Harriet’s easily accessible spy route, contained within several blocks. It acts as a geographic stutter, a gerrymandered district, its far-flung sites connected not by physical closeness but by necessity. This is a region defined by its specificity, its contingency, and its opposition. This is a region that cannot be geographically homogenous because the purposes that demand its construction are engendered by heterogeneous crises. And while part of how I understand region more broadly is as specific, contingent and defined in part by its opposition, *Junior Brown* is an especially extreme example of this construction. *Eloise*’s hotel is, on some level, a contained space, and *Harriet*’s spy route is a single, connected place. Buddy’s planets are linked not geographically, but theoretically; not as place but as space. More so than *Eloise* and *Harriet*, the crises of *Junior Brown* that engender the necessity for region are formidable ones. *Eloise* and *Harriet* make labor out of their play, but Buddy’s region emerges out of the imperatives of survival.

When the solar system in Mr. Pool’s hidden room begins squeaking, Buddy wonders if the squeak isn’t in the system after all. “It is in the system,” Mr. Pool insists, and Buddy laughs, saying that “maybe the system is just rubbing too hard against the dark” (113). Buddy is the squeak outside the system, the unexpected, troublesome sound that shouldn’t be audible, the squeak produced by the system’s violent chafing against

what it can't contain or understand. Buddy is the squeak and the dark both, the sound brought out of the blackness when it's pressed too hard. Hamilton's troubling of ideological and spatial hierarchies ultimately creates an environment that supports not only the mappable region of Buddy's planets, but an aesthetics of instability that effectively communicates the imperatives and hazards of self-creation. In this world, a planet can be both a child and a basement room. A child can be a planet and a star; a boy and a mountain. In this world, Junior, increasingly lost to his mental illness, "burn[s] from a great distance . . . a lonely star" (105) produced, as stars are, by his own collapse. In the dark of the school basement, with only a single bulb "burning in front of him," Junior looks "just like a child . . . a mountain with the summer sun coming up red behind it" (185). The variability in spatial and geographical images communicates the extent to which Junior, the subject of most of these comparisons, is coming increasingly undone, detached from stability.

This troubling of place and space occurs not only through Buddy's construction of regional environment, but in Junior's attempts to understand how his own body and self fits into a world that terrifies him. Junior's artistic talents extend not only to piano, but to art, and he creates an extensive project called *The Red Man* that effectively captures both his terrors and the text's aesthetics of spatial reevaluation. *The Red Man* is an oil-painting of a large figure of a man, outlined in black. The figure is completely red, save for his feet; "Junior had left his feet unpainted to show that the red color came from the man's brain. In fact, the skull . . . was a throbbing blood-red, darker than the rest" (136). Inside *The Red Man*, Junior is slowly and steadily drawing a large cast of characters: "One day Junior would fill his *Red Man* with people . . . He had already started painting in people

who lived in The Red Man in their apartment houses, on streets” (137). Hamilton’s syntax in that latter quote is striking: not, as we might expect the sentence to be constructed, “painting people in their apartment houses in The Red Man,” but “painting in people who lived in The Red Man in their apartment houses.” This is not a simple miniaturization, but rather a redefinition of bodies, spaces, and conceptions. For Junior, disassociating from perceived reality in the final chapters of the book, the people he knows and sees *are* people who live in The Red Man. His Red Man is, by another name, the planet of Junior Brown. Red evokes Junior’s mental illness, the graphic and bloody cacophony of his brain, where senses lose their separateness and become recodified as interdependent: “With his eyes closed, all was night. [Junior] could be red” (162).

Hamilton ultimately gives us two different reinventions of spatial reality with Buddy and Junior—Buddy as an author of his own region, Junior as schizophrenic—and while Buddy’s reimagining of space and place presents as a viable alternative to official institutions, the emergence of Junior’s mental illness also works as a kind of resistance, a process by which Junior attempts to make the invisible visible. While schizophrenia is undeniably destructive and debilitating for Junior, it also gives him an uneasy vehicle through which to form alternative responses and challenges to institutionalized racism. Through the Red Man, Junior is reordering systems of power and his own place in those systems, positioning himself as the supreme figure. At the same time, the figures he paints are not autonomous, but manifestations of Junior’s own experience of invisibility—Junior’s attempt to control his own experiences. The large size of Junior’s body, a source of deep shame and anxiety for him, becomes something meaningful, even

transformative. As the Red Man, Junior takes up space in a way that enables him to contain the great dissonance of his life.

The Red Man is a private representation, meant for Junior's eyes only, but the extent of Junior's illness becomes visible to others in the final chapters of the novel, when Junior asks Buddy to accompany him to Junior's piano lesson. The piano teacher, Miss Peebs, is profoundly mentally ill, a fact that never occurs to Junior but is immediately apparent to a terrified Buddy: "The moment she opened the door, Buddy knew Miss Peebs was crazy. He had taken one look at her pits of burning eyes, and he knew that her mind was lost behind the deadly yellow of her face" (173). For most of the novel, Miss Peebs has forbidden Junior from practicing her piano, as she has a diseased relative in her bedroom who cannot be disturbed. Increasingly, Miss Peebs becomes terrified that the relative will not leave her home, despite her attempts to eject him. So that Junior has a chance to practice, Buddy agrees to see if he can help remove the relative from Miss Peebs's apartment, and is horrified upon visiting to find the relative does not actually exist. Junior and Miss Peebs have developed a shared psychosis, a *folie à deux*, and both of them can see the relative plainly. *The Planet of Junior Brown* is about seeing and not seeing, and so it makes sense that the novel's climactic moment centers around simultaneous, paradoxical invisibility and visibility. Buddy can't see the relative Junior and Miss Peebs see, but it's also through this invisibility made manifest that Buddy sees for the first time just how ill Junior really is. "I just wanted you to see him," Junior tells Buddy. The relative functions as a disturbing materialization of Junior's illness, but he also indicates Junior's profound desire to be acknowledged, to be visible, to matter, even though Junior believes himself to be ugly and reprehensible in others'

eyes. If Buddy is committed to the task of reappropriating place for divergent uses, Junior effectively does the same, creating presence where others find absence.

Now wholly unable to his hallucinations from others' realities, Junior must rely on the only emotional and physical support he has: his best friend, horrified at what he now understands to be mental illness. A distraught Buddy cries to Mr. Pool that they can't rely on state institutions to help treat Junior: "You put Junior in a hospital and he won't never come out. They'll lose him . . . They'll see how black he is, and they'll say that's the problem, we got to get to the white inside" (187-88). Foucault uses the psychiatric hospital as an example of a heterotopia of deviance. For Buddy, however, the hospital is not a separate site designed to isolate those outside the norm, but rather a horrific extension of the norm: a place so fundamentally tied to the state's needs for repressive and aggressive erasure that it is inseparable from the system that has ensured his abandonment. The real heterotopia, in this novel, is the regional space of the planets, the site that offers a space for those who diverge from acceptability. Buddy's decision to lower Junior Brown down into the dark of his planet rather than remand him into state care is therefore logically consistent with the novel's understanding of what constitutes a deviating environment.

In the novel's final scene, Mr. Pool and Buddy drive Junior to Buddy's planet in Mr. Pool's car, Buddy nervous despite "the comfort of this new hiding place": "He was not used to automobiles. He couldn't distinguish lights flashing through the windows. 'Never thought I'd be traveling down this street with a whole solar system and a monster besides,' Buddy said" (194). The spatial relations between bodies and systems and sites have collapsed completely; Buddy, removed from his customary method of urban

navigation, is disoriented. The regional site formed by the planets, however, survives this breakdown as a potential place of healing, a beacon of palliative care in the face of spatial and emotional cacophony. Once Buddy and Mr. Pool hoist Junior and his relative into the basement dark, Buddy surveys the new situation: “It seemed to Buddy that he had in the room all he needed . . . He had Junior and Mr. Pool . . . and the other boys . . . He had the solar system . . . he, Buddy, was Tomorrow Billy because he was the strongest and knew best how to survive” (208-9). Improbably, against all odds, Buddy has constructed a consistency out of inconsistency, whole planets from patchwork continents. There is no reassuring conclusion, no sign that Junior will get the help he needs to achieve some mental stability; Hamilton refuses to provide readers with resolution. Instead, we are left with a wholly child-authored solution, an answer that Buddy’s regional construct, although incomplete and dangerous, is the only possible response outside the system that has failed these boys. Whether or not Junior and Buddy will be all right, whether they’ll be safe, or live to adulthood, or find homes outside the basements of the Upper West Side, *Junior Brown* is not interested in answering. The novel ends, instead, on a promise of child community entirely independent from adult interests, Buddy’s call to the members of his region: “We are together because we have to learn to live for each other” (210). On the planet of Tomorrow Billy, on the planet of *Junior Brown*, that imperative is gravity.

A Walk Through the Storied City: Mapping *Eloise*, *Harriet*, and *Junior Brown*

New York City children’s literature is a large enough subgenre to merit its own guidebook: Leonard Marcus’s *Storied City: A Children’s Book Walking-Tour Guide to*

New York City (2003). Marcus divides his book into eleven different neighborhoods, and his writing is less of a mediation on children's fiction than it is a literal guide to place. Readers can use his prose as a map. Marcus's entries stitch together the sites of New York children's literature, building a route that neatly superimposes place onto text, text onto place. In his guidebook, for example, Ludwig Bemelmans appears just before Horatio Alger, the two linked not for any similarity between style, tone, historical moment or context, but entirely due to geographic compatibility. Bemelmans lived in Gramercy Park South while writing *Madeline* in the late 1930s, and the famous statue of George Washington on a horse in Union Square, just a few blocks away from Bemelmans's home, explicitly appears in Alger's novel, *Ragged Dick*. In this guidebook, children's literature acts as a kind of region of its own, coming "together to form a virtual New York, both mirroring and taking off imaginatively from the real one" (vi). Setting aside any misgivings about the loaded term "real," Marcus's claim is for the validity of alternate atlases, other ways of conceptualizing space and place in New York City. That the city's children's literature is extensive enough to fill more than a hundred pages of a guidebook suggests that the stories these books tell are not the only narrative.

I close this chapter with a brief look at Marcus's references to the three texts I have previously discussed. Each of these references gesture in intentional and unintentional ways at how these novels construct place and space, and how readers might enter or interact with the crossbreed of literature and lived experience. In the chapter titled "Midtown Manhattan," *Eloise* merits a substantial paragraph, one that not only directs readers to the exterior of the Plaza, but ushers them inside as well:

Return to Fifth Avenue, crossing back to the west side, and walk north until you come to the formal open space called Grand Army Plaza and—just to the left—**The Plaza Hotel** (768 Fifth Avenue), home of Kay Thompson and Hilary Knight's *Eloise* (1955). Entering The Plaza by the revolving door immortalized in Knight's red-pink-black-and-white drawings, you will find yourself in the familiar looking lobby and recognize just ahead the **Palm Court** where, like *Eloise*, you may decide to have lunch or possibly afternoon tea. The mail desk, ballrooms, and elevators are all pretty much as Hilary Knight drew them. The ground-floor *Eloise* gift shop is a more recent addition. By following the lobby corridor to the left and turning right at the end of the passageway, you will still come to that shop, and to the oil portrait of *Eloise* . . . (55)

Like *Eloise*, we are supposed to enter through the revolving door; like *Eloise*, we are invited to have lunch or tea in the Palm Court; like *Eloise*, we can pass through the lobby, by the ballrooms, by the elevators.⁷ Marcus takes care to guide us in the direction of the *Eloise* gift shop, with its famous accompanying portrait. The imperatives of the informative paragraph are striking, in light of Thompson and Knight's commitment to creating a space in which their child protagonist can challenge adult-defined, regimented geographies. While *Eloise*'s racial and class privilege enables her to reconstitute pre-defined environments, the implied tourist of Marcus's guidebook benefits from and supports capitalist ideologies through a pre-determined navigation of the Plaza. The given route encourages tourists to consume—to eat lunch, have tea, and visit the gift shop—as a way of coming closer to the text. Marcus does not urge his readers to run up and down the hallways, or pour water down the mail chute (these would be impractical and probably unlawful suggestions), but the gap between his narrow directives and *Eloise*'s chaotic negotiation is a large and striking one. *Eloise* constructs a heterotopia out of the Plaza; Marcus instructs his readers to use the Plaza in ways commensurate with its

⁷As of 2012, both the *Eloise* oil painting and the *Eloise* gift shop have relocated elsewhere within the Plaza Hotel. Readers of Marcus who attempt to find the painting and the gift shop using his specific directions—as I did—will find themselves at a frozen yogurt shop instead.

intended use. I have not argued that the space *Eloise* constructs is wholly separate from capitalist ideologies. In fact, her freedom and navigation depends almost entirely on her family's financial independence. However, *Eloise* repurposes the Plaza for her own personal, idiosyncratic enjoyment, rather than to benefit the hotel or its establishment. Marcus's guidebook entry reverses that repurposing, framing the Plaza in ways that value consumption over chaos, ultimately selling the delight of childhood resistance.

Eloise may receive an extremely detailed paragraph, but Marcus's account of *Harriet the Spy* takes up several pages, thanks in part to that book's numerous references to real-world geographic sites. *Harriet*'s entry is in the chapter "Central Park/Upper East Side," and Marcus records not only the book's locations, but its reception, as well as Louise Fitzhugh's own home in the neighborhood:

Fitzhugh's novel shocked some early critics . . . youngsters were quick to identify with the funny, feisty rebel who wears her heart on her sweatshirt sleeve.

The well-to-do Welsches live in a three-story private town house at **East 87th Street and East End Avenue**, across the street from Gracie Mansion. Fitzhugh does not specify the address, but the most likely house is the one at 558 East 87th Street. The third-floor windows under the eaves on the East End Avenue side are those of Harriet's own bedroom—and private bath!—looking out on **Carl Schurz Park** . . . Harriet's "spy route," details of which Fitzhugh left purposely vague, consists of shops and residences within a few blocks to the south and west of home. (69-70)

Like the entry for *Eloise*, the *Harriet* section is highly specific, noting not only the location of certain sites mentioned in the texts, but sites within said sites, Harriet's bedroom in particular. This entry, however, is far, far lengthier than *Eloise*'s. The number of sentences devoted to Harriet are, in some ways, more important than what is said in them. Marcus understands that this book is embedded into the city in multiple ways, not only through its detailed geography but through its considerable popularity. There is an

intriguing juxtaposition in this section between Marcus's brief discussion of *Harriet's* cultural popularity—against a not-always-receptive climate—and the immediately subsequent discussion of *Harriet's* locations. Although the length of *Harriet's* section is not intentionally a way for Marcus to justify wide-spread admiration for the text, the structure of Marcus's writing seems to suggest that detailed geographic presence can be a kind of implicit validation for a literary work. The numerous references to different sites in *Harriet* function almost as citations for an argument about the book's popularity. This is a text so firmly routed in its environment, so undeniably part of a locality, that it becomes impossible to dislodge it from readers' consciousness.

Intriguingly, after pointing out the nearby address where Fitzhugh lived while writing *Harriet*, Marcus takes an additional paragraph to note that while *Harriet's* neighborhood “ranks among Manhattan's most coveted addresses,” it is not uniformly wealthy (71). Sport, *Harriet's* best friend, whose father is an unsuccessful writer, lives nearby, and, as Marcus points out, “the apartment that [Sport and his father] share is cramped and inadequate . . . [Harriet] turns to her notebook to mull over this seemingly unfair fact of New York life” (ibid). Unlike the other passages on *Harriet*, this one does not mention any specific address, school, park, or building, and seems to exist only to acknowledge the neighborhood's class heterogeneity. While in his entry for *Eloise*, Marcus subverts that book's heterotopic impulse, reframing *Eloise* as commodity rather than as spatial challenge, here he indirectly supports *Harriet's* heterotopia, acknowledging that the novel represents a space that is simultaneously hegemonic and anti-hegemonic. He ends the section with *Harriet's* own musings about the difference between her house and Sport's, refusing to comment on it: “WHAT MAKES PEOPLE

RICH OR POOR?” Harriet is unable to answer this question, and Marcus, in leaving a space for “this seemingly unfair fact of New York life,” implicitly validates her important struggle (ibid).⁸

After the surplus of the *Harriet* discussion, longer than almost any other entry in Marcus’s guidebook, the reference to *The Planet of Junior Brown*—just two sentences!—is almost shocking in its comparative lexical poverty: “Now walk (or take the Number 104 bus) north on Broadway to West 111th Street. The title character of Virginia Hamilton’s stormed-tossed [sic] novel, *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971), loves this wide avenue with its “concrete islands,” tempting bakery smells, and ‘different faces . . . passing him’” (82). Admittedly, *Junior Brown* contains somewhat fewer explicit references than *Harriet* to specific locations, but nevertheless, Marcus leaves out entirely any mention of Buddy Clark, or Buddy’s navigation of the Upper West Side, which in Hamilton’s novel includes specific, important intersections. This entry is likely abbreviated for two major reasons. First, *Junior Brown* is a less popular novel than either *Eloise* or *Harriet* in terms of overall sales, and therefore possibly less of interest to the average reader of *Storied City*. Secondly, and more to the point of this chapter, the specific places referenced in *Junior Brown*, unlike those in *Eloise* and *Harriet*, are not all within a single, easily accessed site. The Plaza is navigable, as are the few blocks surrounding Harriet’s home on 87th Street, but there is a marked distance between West 111th Street, where Marcus decides to focus his entry, and 79th and Broadway, where Buddy finds himself between planets. The guidebook fails *Junior Brown*, just as *Junior*

⁸ My personal visit to Harriet’s supposed address in 2012, which included a walk around a ten block radius, revealed a relatively homogeneous neighborhood, with no major visible differences in class. If the neighborhood was heterogeneous in 1964 and in 2003, when Fitzhugh wrote the book and when Marcus published his guide, it seems to be altered somewhat today towards gentrification.

Brown fails the guidebook. I point this out not to critique Marcus or his choices, but to acknowledge that *Junior Brown* presents a regional formation that fundamentally challenges easy spatial categorization or convenience.

What Marcus's guidebook ultimately does is to provide readers with another route of access into the children's literature of New York City: through these works' locations, rather than their subgenres, intended readerships, or styles. This chapter aims at a similar lens, although that lens is more sharply defined. Upon first read, *Eloise*, *Harriet the Spy* and *The Planet of Junior Brown* may not appear to share much more in common than their urban setting. However, all three works, to different degrees, attempt to dismantle easy categorizations, binaries, and divisions within ideologies of class, age and race. Each book creates the conditions that support a complex heterotopic local space, refusing to fall victim to the age-old assumptions of simplicity that surround the genre of children's fiction. Returning once more to James Peacock's call to read contemporary Brooklyn novels as regionalist writing, I note especially his focus on texts that advocate a cultural synthesis: "[T]he more effective Brooklyn fictions depart from this model into more abstract, ethical territory" (2). "Locality" as a concept, if it is to have any resonance outside the historical and quaint, must be acknowledged to have dimensions beyond the immediate, beyond the accessible or immediately understood. *Eloise*, *Harriet*, and *Junior Brown* do this through an oscillation between small-scale concerns and large-scale understandings about the way children construct and are constructed by their geographic and ideological locations.

Conclusion:

Oh, the Places You'll Go! Bridging Children's Literature and Children's Geographies

"You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go."

Dr. Seuss, *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

While the word "literature" implies a certain methodological or critical approach in line with the research and writing practices undertaken in literary studies, current work in children's literature scholarship pushes the boundaries of what "literature" means. It reconsiders to what extent literature engages with other practices of childhood, in areas encompassing history, music, television, film, material culture, sociology, psychology, sexuality, ethics and philosophy, and countless other subjects. The program for the Children's Literature Association Conference in June 2013 reveals a firm resistance to writing within the lines of conventional literary study. Papers with titles like "Everypony Needs Some Brony Sometimes: My Little Pony, Fan Culture, and a Royal Wedding Extravaganza," "Would You Kindly Press Start? The Loss of Agency within *Bioshock*," and "A Dolla Makes Her Holla: The 21st-Century Sexualized Child of Reality TV" expand the purview of what's considered to be appropriate primary sources for children's literature scholarship. Robin Bernstein's recent *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights* (2011), a historical analysis of childhood and material culture, shows how Americans constructed the concept of childish innocence through toys, books, theatrical props, and domestic objects that invited certain racialized responses or practices. Kenneth Kidd, in *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of*

Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature (2011) demonstrates that the practice of psychoanalysis in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries owes a large debt to books written for children; that the omnipresence of children's literature assisted in the increasing cultural acceptance of psychoanalysis in the United States. Bernstein and Kidd, among many others, shift the study of children's texts away from disciplinary boundaries and towards productive interdisciplinary practices. Literature as traditionally understood—the printed book with written text—is still absolutely central and crucial to the field, and it is hard to imagine that definition ever significantly evaporating. What these works show, however, is that the separation of children's literature from other child-related disciplines, practices, and methodologies narrows our understanding of these texts' implications. The future of children's literature scholarship depends on our recognition that literature is an interconnected, shifting part of a larger, more encompassing field of childhood studies.

To some small extent, this dissertation reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of literary studies, but its methodological and theoretical framework depend largely on practices native or familiar to literary criticism. I invoke the scholarship of Doreen Massey and Edward Soja, both human geographers, but rely primarily on regionalist scholarship for my primary formations of place and space in these children's books. This project, therefore, is ultimately a work of literary criticism that gestures towards some foundational work done in the field of human geography. As an academic trained in the methodologies of a literature department—albeit a fairly unconventional literature department—I wrote a dissertation using the practices I learned through classes, through reading the scholarship of others, and through my own processes of trial and error.

However, in the process of putting this current project together, and thinking towards the book it will eventually become, I've considered how best I can contribute to the field of children's literature scholarship and childhood studies more generally. If, as I believe, children's literature scholarship is increasingly porous, more in conversation with other disciplines that examine childhood, than the book version of this project should align itself with that shift and attempt to speak to those outside the traditional humanities similarly concerned with constructions of childhood.

Scholarship on regionalist literature often invokes the image or connotations of childhood in an attempt to characterize the fictional region as something nostalgic, past, innocent, or little.¹ Few works of criticism, if any, make an effort to unpack the concept of childhood as something that—like the region—is a constructed category. And while childhood merits occasional mention, regionalist scholarship excludes children's literature almost completely, although *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Little Women* appear briefly in works like Fetterley and Pryse's *Writing out of Place* and Robert Jackson's *Seeking the Region in American Literature and Culture*.² Despite the significant engagement many works of U.S. children's literature have with regionalist concerns, this project is the first and only study of the ways books for children foreground local place, and certainly the only one to identify major works of children's fiction as regional writing. However, although there are few pre-existing intersections

¹ Stephanie Foote quotes Susan Stewart: “[Regional writing] is a nostalgia for context, for the heroic past, for moral order, for childhood and the collective experiences of preindustrial life” (35).

² Today most children's literature scholars claim *Little Women* and *Huck Finn* as part of the U.S. children's literature canon, but neither book was published as children's literature. Both have considerable cross-over appeal for both academics (nineteenth-century Americanists) and contemporary adult readers. *Little Women* and *Huck Finn* arguably escape marginalization within regionalist scholarship because existing scholarship is able to ignore the ways these books speak and have always spoken to (un)imagined child readers.

between children's literature, childhood, and regionalism as studied by literary scholars, many critics have seriously and productively explored the intersections of childhood and place. The field of children's geographies—which investigates the performance of childhood at different scales—is thriving, doing important critical work that demands integration into any serious interdisciplinary study of children and their environments.

Children's geographies, as a sub-discipline within the field of human geographies, first gained a foothold as a serious area of inquiry in the late 1960s (its birth occurring around the same time as children's literature criticism). Crucially, this scholarship has always placed at its center the critical questions of child agency and action: to what extent are children oppressed in their physical environments? How do children create spaces and places through play and labor? At what scale do children's geographies take place, and can their productions of place and space occur simultaneously at different scales? How can geographers ethically study children and their environments? In the 1970s and 1980s, Bill Bunge, Roger Hart, Denis Wood, and Cindi Katz pioneered the study of child place and space with these questions in mind, exploring the spatial oppression of children by adults in Detroit and Toronto (Bunge), the use of yard toys in a small New England town (Hart), the freedom of children "doing nothing" (Wood), and shifts in the everyday lives of children in rural Sudan after the introduction of an irrigation system (Katz). More recently, human geographers working with child-related concerns have primarily considered, as Stuart Aitken observes, "the ways young people are *placed*, at what *scale* they operate and in which ways their identities are *fixed* [by adults]," acknowledging that the spatial and placed practices of young people are inextricable from their social, political, and cultural identities (19). Places matter because

the everyday lives of children depend, to a large extent, on their interactions with their environments. These interactions are always dependent on child bodies, constructed by adults as vulnerable, desired, innocent, or, in many places, as labor. Human geographers understand that children are racialized, classed, gendered, sexualized or desexualized, and understood primarily on a continuum of development. These ideologies are always embodied by children (and by adults), and always take place *in* places; that is, we cannot divorce the social, political, and cultural construction of childhood from the environments in which it occurs.

Although the concepts of place and space have some currency in literary studies, human geographers' understanding of these concepts depend heavily on a measurement rarely considered by the humanities: scale. Broadly, scale is the notion of geographic size, either relative or fixed, and although geographers generally understand it in the context of space, it also applies to the temporal (the size and relation of time units) and the thematic (the classifying of differently sized groups, such as children or urban neighborhoods). As D.R. Montello argues, scale has "multiple referents," each implicating a different perspective and way of perceiving geographic size. Cartographic scale concerns the sized relationship of a particular feature on a map in relation to the actual space it takes up in the world. Analysis scale refers to the situatedness of where persons approach a given problem or condition; for example, city council members in the U.S. are responsible for the issue of garbage collection in their municipalities. Finally, phenomenon scale looks at the size at which any given human or physical processes exist, irrespective of the size at which they are analyzed (Montello 13501). These scales are necessarily interrelated. In children's geographies, much of the critical work done on

scale attempts to reconcile or engage analysis scale with phenomenon scale: in other words, to understand how scholars' subjective, situated perspectives of children and their environments interacts with the size at which children actually work, play, and live. Stuart Aitken notes that geography, more so than any other discipline, acknowledges that young people—like all people—“operate at various scales simultaneously. . . [A]t local and global scales, there are varied and contradictory geographies that both liberate and constrict the lives of young people” (23-4). Scale, as a concept, allows us to see that the construction of childhood by adults and by children occurs at multiple levels with varying reaches. The child playing in her backyard with a Little Mermaid Happy Meal toy from McDonalds, for example, is in some ways participating in globalized capitalist processes, but her particular practice of play remains intensely local.

Because it necessarily connotes the issue of size—of small and large and everything subjective and interrelated those terms imply—scale is an absolutely critical part of children's geographies. Over the last decade, many scholars, including Aitken, Chris Philo, John Horton, Peter Kraftl, and Nicola Ansell, have explored the extent to which children's geographies take place at different scales. For the most part, these studies find that children construct their environments at the local level, or micro-scale, engaging with place through specific, site-contingent acts necessarily limited by adult constraints. While Nicola Ansell acknowledges the importance of the micro-scale, she suggests global exchanges, or macro-geographies, are crucial components of everyday child lives. Ansell proposes what she terms a “network conceptualization of scale,” wherein geographers view childhood as always simultaneously local *and* global: that global processes are not inherently abstract, and can be understood in concrete ways, just

as we understand locality. Rather than remain within a local-global binary, Ansell proposes, children's geographies must see children as

nodes of material connections to places near and far—nodes that are embodied, perceiving, acting, expressing, connected with other humans and with objects, both natural and social beings, but not fully aware autonomous agents . . . To do so [children's geographies] draws on a growing body of work . . . that, in reconsidering subjectivities, stresses the significance of embodiment and the limits to individualized agency. (199)

Like Merah Gubar, who acknowledges the “power of adult influence while nevertheless entertaining the possibility” that children can be agents, Ansell deftly negotiates between the pessimistic understanding of children as always already colonized and the overly generous understanding of children as wholly or ideally separate from adult influence and desire. Unlike Gubar, however, Ansell conceptualizes this productively gray area through the lens of scale, suggesting that the globally mediated relations that help construct childhood and children are just as significant to children's lives as the places and peoples with whom children come into contact. While children's geographies requires some significant acknowledgement of embodied children, their practices, and their spoken statements, research into the environments of children also demands the inclusion of distant adults whose policies, discourses, and practices affect young people through a chain of actions and reactions (Ansell 205).

Although Ansell does not explicitly name the specific roles these distant adults play, some of them are involved in the production of children's literature, as writers, illustrators, publishers, editors, agents, librarians, booksellers, and parents. Despite the fact that children's geographers and critics in children's literature are primarily concerned with similar issues—child agency, adult mediation, adult-child relationships, the

experiences of children—neither field has seriously engaged with the other. To date, there is only one instance of attempted crossover: an article published in *Children's Geographies* in 2006, by Jenny Bavidge, titled “Stories in Space: The Geographies of Children’s Literature.” A literary critic, Bavidge reaches out to an audience of geographers to “make the case for the place of children’s literature in the understanding of children’s geographies” (320). Some of Bavidge’s conclusions about the way children’s literature speaks to and about children diverge significantly from my own; she aligns herself firmly with the Jacqueline Rose school of children’s literature as always already impossible, while my scholarship looks for the ways that impossibility bumps up against unexpected or unanticipated possibilities. However, her article takes an important step in bridging these two disciplines by noting that children’s literature

can show the geographer . . . the discourses by which places are made visible in children’s literature, the uses that are made of the figure of the child in writings about urban worlds, for example, or pastoral stories, and the way the narrative logics and representative strategies of children’s literature have their own spatial politics . . . The places of [children’s] fictions have likewise become the *setting* of versions of childhood. (323-4)

This observation is crucial, distinguishing between the different kinds of geographies children’s literature invokes. Not only does children’s literature *have* place—the interior worlds, environments, neighborhoods, homes, and schools the characters inhabit—but children’s literature *makes* place and *takes* place. Writing for children, like any kind of aesthetic formation, is always political, and therefore always spatial; the way, for example, that adult characters do or do not take up space within any given text affects the narrative of the book as a whole. Picture books, in particular, employ narrative strategies that rely considerably on what we might identify as a kind of geography: the spatial and

placed interplay between text and image, arranged carefully on the page to invite certain kinds of reading practices from child readers. And although Bavidge does not bring up this additional dimension, children's books—as material objects—are always placed through acts of publishing and dissemination. Samuel Griswold Goodrich's nineteenth-century Peter Parley series is significant primarily because the vast majority of contemporary children in the United States whose families had disposable income had at least one accessible copy at home for consultation. Although Goodrich's books were hugely responsible for shaping the way U.S. children thought about geography, the books themselves were also placed, through their physical presence and relative convenience. Where these books are *not* is often as important as where these books *are*. Alvin Schwartz and Stephen Gammell's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* series (1981-1991) were the most challenged series of books throughout the 1990s, according to the American Library Association, and were accordingly missing from many library shelves across the United States. As reviews of these books on the website Goodreads indicate, many children accessed the *Scary Stories* series through means not directly mediated by adults, including covert sharing under desks in classrooms and between friends at sleepovers. The place and space in which these books existed for a significant period are therefore critical to any understanding of the meanings they generate.

In her article, Bavidge suggests that although her particular audience is children's geographers, "there is another version of this project, one which would address literary critics and argue the necessity of using the insights of geographers to analyse [sic] the representation of space and place in children's fiction" (320). The book I will develop from this dissertation will position itself—or place itself—precisely along those axes,

aiming primarily at critics of children's literature and humanities-centric childhood studies, and engaging with the terminology, observations, scholarship, and research practices used by geographers. Along with the shift in children's literature scholarship towards a more inclusive childhood studies, critics are increasingly speculating as to how we can productively reconsider the extent to which children participate in their own social, political, and cultural constructions. While there is some advocacy for a familiar Rosian model—led primarily by Perry Nodelman, whose 2010 book *The Hidden Adult* claims children's literature absolutely *must* involve adults to be considered children's literature—others have suggested alternative perspectives that productive for a project that seeks to bridge two disciplines. At the June 2013 Children's Literature Association Conference, Marah Gubar proposed what she terms “the kinship model” of children's literature scholarship, in which adult scholars explore what (“real”) children and adults have in common, rather than what separates them, without ignoring that those separations are real and significant. This model acknowledges that “real” children *do* exist and *do* interact meaningfully with children's literature and culture, an imperative foundation, but it also gestures towards an interdisciplinary framework: exploring what children's literature and children's geographies have in common, rather than what separates them, without ignoring that those separations are real and significant. If children's literature critics are looking for ways to integrate “real” children into their scholarship, then children's geographies offers a compelling vehicle: decades of research and writing that considers how to effectively work with place, space, and “real” children in ways that privilege their rights as agential human beings.

The book I will develop from this dissertation will largely set aside literary regionalism as a critical practice in exchange for children's geographies, considering how research done with "real" children and their environments contradicts, supports, or otherwise engages with children's literature. I might, for example, incorporate research in human geography done on children's illustrations of places and spaces, juxtaposed with illustrations in children's literature of similar or comparable places and spaces. There is a considerable amount of work in children's geographies on urban childhoods, and I would fold that work and its conclusions about children's spaces of play and labor into analyses of the way those spaces function in fictional realms. I am also considering a chapter on the production of online adolescent geographies, and how teenage fan cultures manufacture defined and often aggressive spaces for young people to write their own literature, often through responses to fictional works they admire. While the argument for this book project is yet undefined, it will necessarily go beyond the broader thesis of my dissertation—that child characters become social actors through their engagement with local place—to make a claim about the way child fictions and child "realities" engage with one another. To some extent, the division between those two categories is artificial, as children's literature plays a major role in the social, political, and cultural constructions of childhood across the globe, and "real" children are to a certain extent the product of adults' imagined ideas and conceptions. Nevertheless, child characters are not "real" children, and "real" children are not child characters; child characters are almost entirely imagined, while "real" children have greater opportunities for responding to or disengaging from adult practices in ways adults cannot or do not anticipate. In my introduction to this dissertation, I made an explicit distinction between fictional children

and “real” children because to speak meaningfully about “real” children requires the use of alternative methodologies and research practices external to traditional literary criticism. However, if children’s literature scholarship is to continue its move away from the familiar, safe enclaves of bounded pages and into the alien, permeable lands of interdisciplinary work, it is critical to work towards the inclusion of different perspectives and alternate forms of research, expanding our critical skills through the practice of multiplicity. As Mr. Pool says in *The Planet of Junior Brown*, “Not space, nor light nor any of the others can be measured alone, but only in relation to one or more of the others” (15-16). The next step is outward.

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