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HIGHER EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGE FICTION 1886–1912

Gunilla Lindgren

LUND STUDIES IN ENGLISH 110

Editors: Marianne Thormählen and Beatrice Warren



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Introduction

College is a very satisfying sort of life; the books and study and regular classes keep you alive mentally, and then when your mind gets tired, you have the gymnasium and outdoor athletics, and always plenty of congenial friends who are thinking about the same things you are.

Judy in Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, 1912, 133–134.

The focal point of this study is American college fiction written by women graduates in the decades preceding the First World War. In my investigation I make a clear distinction between these popular college stories, which satisfied a general reading public's demand for information as well as entertainment, and the young girls' series books which followed suit.¹ My object has been to study the elements of 'higher education' that feature in the early college books set in a female environment.² During the relevant period, women in America were invited to meet the intellectual demands, within the framework of a liberal-arts education, that men had faced for generations. Their access to higher education was only granted on certain conditions, however: it was generally held that academic studies must not impinge on their feminine attractions, nor militate against women's traditional position in society. The stories which popularized this new and adventurous experience for women were usually set in a female and enclosed environment – an environment with which their authors were familiar, having been educated at the then recently founded women's colleges in the north-east of the U.S.A.

When I started my project, I was interested in finding out what aspects of higher education for girls were discussed in these college stories. During the period in which the genre flourished only the chosen few, young women as well as young men, were directly involved in academic studies, and few people could begin to realize the impact that higher education would eventually have on society and women's position. I proceeded on an assumption from which a study of college students around 1960 set out, to the effect that the 'academic achievement and successful attainment of a liberal education was a broadening experience, inseparable from the total maturing of the personality'.³ Although this statement was formulated half a century after the end of the period on which this study concentrates, I have found it to be a fair

¹ The term 'series books' is explained in the section called 'College series books' in chapter two.

² 'College fiction' as a subgenre is defined in the section called 'The "college story"' in chapter two.

³ Donald Brown, 'Personality, Environments, and Academic Productivity', 536–62 (538) in Nevitt Sanford, ed., *The American College* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962). Hereafter New York is cited as NY.

summary of the process described in classic North American college fiction for women.

My analysis concentrates on four novels: Helen Dawes Brown's *Two College Girls*, Caroline Macomb Fuller's *Across the Campus*, Julia Augusta Schwartz's *Elinor's College Career*, and Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*.⁴ These novels were singled out because they enabled me to follow the intellectual, mental, and social training offered to the protagonists year by year and to identify the various ways in which the girls are seen to be educated throughout their college existence. These books show that the specific kind of education and environment provided at college helps student characters to develop their personalities, activate dormant personal and intellectual resources, and acquire a wide understanding, from their first nervous entrance until the melancholy departure from college. Apart from subjecting these four books to close scrutiny, I have read every work of college fiction for female audiences within the relevant period that I have been able to find, as well as a majority of college stories with male protagonists and quite a few series books; these are stories to which I will briefly refer from time to time.⁵

The present study shows that women's college stories contain various and sometimes downright contradictory strands which form the total of higher education in the fictional context. For instance, in a period when general opinion tended to regard women – and college girls – as a group defined by general characteristics, campus activities in which the girls themselves take on full responsibility are shown to promote individuality and independence. I will argue that Jean Webster's two novels, *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Enemy*,⁶ stand out from the rest in that respect: the idea of college as a starting-point for personal development beyond the college years is especially clearly articulated in them both. To use the imagery of an old proverb, the student characters in these two books are not fed, but given the tools by which they learn to feed themselves. From the point of view of women's self-discovery as encouraged by higher education, little has been written about these two novels.⁷

⁴ Helen Dawes Brown, *Two College Girls* (Boston: Ticknor, 1886); Caroline Macomber Fuller, *Across the Campus* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899; repr. 1932); Julia Augusta Schwartz, *Elinor's College Career* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1906); Jean Webster, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (Century, 1912; repr. Puffin Classics, 1995).

⁵ All the stories are listed and briefly presented in the Appendix.

⁶ Jean Webster, *Dear Enemy* (NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1915).

⁷ Two surveys of college fiction, discussed further down, contain short comments. Shirley Marchalonis briefly points to the 'transformational power of the college', and the intense joy college can promote, as they are expressed in *Daddy-Long-Legs*; see her *College Girls: A Century in Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 61–63. Sherrie A. Inness quotes one passage in *Daddy-Long-Legs* and uses it to illustrate her argument that a college community is 'fragmented' in her *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 111. Much to my surprise, I have not found any scholarly comments referring to *Dear Enemy*.

The opening in 1865 of the first women's college in the U.S. was preceded by a great deal of anxiety, some of which had been anticipated in Alfred Tennyson's poem *The Princess*, written twenty years earlier.⁸ In *The Princess* young men and women listen to a story about a fictive place of higher education for young women, of a kind not realized at the time in either England or America. The question in that poem, and in society at large, was: Should girls – could girls – study in the same way as young men did?

As in *The Princess*, the real issue behind the general distress surrounding the unfamiliar venture was the apprehension that educated women would intrude on what was considered to be male areas. It was generally feared that higher education would decrease academic women's interest in domestic activities, as well as reduce their capabilities for them. In an academic context, moreover, many were concerned that a young woman who possessed a sharp mind and scholarly interests might develop characteristics which would damage what were felt to be feminine assets, such as agreeable submissiveness.

After initial difficulties due to insufficient academic preparation, time would show that both British and American women not only wanted to study but excelled when given the opportunity to do so. Widely voiced anxieties pertaining to female students and their physical, intellectual, and emotional capabilities in comparison with men's came to naught. Growing more and more popular, women's colleges increased their number of students markedly from the 1880s to the 1910s, when Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* was published (1912).

Previous research

The market is flooded with scholarly texts about higher education for girls from a historical or sociological point of view. Far less work has been done on fictional accounts, especially on the images of education that they supply.

In 1981, Caroline Zilboorg provided a short overview of college 'novels', claiming that they dealt with the 'awakening' of some characters in them.⁹ She mentions only three books set in women's colleges (and they are loosely connected short-story collections). According to Zilboorg, an important part of the collegiate experience described in these books is made up of courtship

⁸ *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Longman Annotated English Poets, 1987), II.

⁹ Caroline Zilboorg, 'Women Before World War I: An Exploration of Their Awakening in the College Novel', *Great Lakes Review* 7, 1981, 29–38. The college 'novels' discussed are Abbe Carter Goodloe, *College Girls* (NY: Scribner's, 1895), Josephine Dodge Daskam (Bacon), *Smith College Stories* (NY: Scribner's 1900); and Margaretta Morris and Louise Buffum Congdon, eds, *A Book of Bryn Mawr Stories* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1901). Hereafter this book is cited as *Bryn Mawr Stories*.

and the process during which characters are prepared for marriage and traditional duties. In my view, no preparation of this kind occurs in college fiction; only the early *College Girls* actually emphasizes courtship and marriage.

The few scholars who have investigated female college fiction on a larger scale have primarily regarded these books as textual manifestations of a promising enterprise, namely women's higher education in the progressive period, which failed to deliver from a feminist point of view – both at the time, and as they claim, even now. Lynn D. Gordon's starting-point in a 1987 article are the drawings of the typical American girl, the so-called Gibson Girl, that were popular in the heyday of the college story.¹⁰ Presenting her as charming and healthy, these images seem to imply approval of the college-educated 'New Woman'; but Gordon argues that those signals are false. She uses non-fictional material and a couple of stories (Jean Webster's *When Patty Went to College* and narratives printed in *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Vassar Miscellany*) to bolster her conviction that popular culture was instrumental in turning the second-generation women students into a 'lost' generation – in particular the young women of the 1910s, who were seen to marry to a greater extent and pursue careers less than their predecessors. Gordon argues that accounts in the media focused on so-called womanly aspects and the good-time activities for which women's colleges did allow increasing space. These accounts did not mention that students were seen to do well academically and be freely committed to political and social causes. In Gordon's view, the various texts she studied reflect no change of attitude with regard to the separate spheres in society and family which were attributed to women and men respectively. Being college-educated and single in the progressive era, Gordon concludes, became 'an unhappy burden instead of a proud choice'.¹¹

Shirley Marchalonis has studied college texts from the 1880s to the 1930s, devoting much space to girls' series and commenting briefly on stories written for a male readership. Attempting to absorb a 'sense of the times', she, too, relates the fictional accounts to educated women's general situation in American society to date. I agree with her comment about the fiction of the early period: 'Stories served as maps of terra incognita, and they attempted

¹⁰ Three years later, Gordon wrote *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Here she discusses American women's higher education up to 1920, using short episodes from three college stories by Jean Webster (36–37) and Julia Augusta Schwartz (142, 143, and 152) as illustrations and arguing that academic women in the period were concerned with general attempts to achieve equality and with the specific question of how to combine marriage and career. Bearing these focal issues in mind, it is remarkable that neither Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* nor her *Dear Enemy* is mentioned in Gordon's book.

¹¹ Lynn D. Gordon, 'The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women's Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920', *American Quarterly* 39, 1987, 211–30.

to refute an image (or images) created by public opinion and a “press” that was frightened, hostile, or opportunistic.¹²

While I have found that women’s college fiction addresses aspects of academic education throughout, Marchalonis claims that there are few traces of ‘intellectual experience’ in stories after *Two College Girls* – an argument that may be applied to girls’ college series books rather than to the stories written for older readers. Marchalonis’s fictional material is, naturally enough, much more extensive than that on which Gordon’s article was based. She takes the opposite view from Gordon, arguing that college stories convey ‘some of the truths’ of the unprecedented experience – indeed, they celebrate it. Adopting a less censorious attitude to the image of college education which progressive-era stories provide than Gordon and Inness (below), Marchalonis maintains that college-fiction writers offered new ideals to their female readers: characters to identify with and environments to long for, neither of which had been visualized before. At the same time, women freshmen-to-be would learn in advance how to behave and attain success at college.¹³

Considering the story collections published around 1900 as the ‘high point’ in her survey, Marchalonis appreciates the invigorating ‘woman’s space’ presented in this fiction. She terms it the ‘green world’ and compares its image of the college campus with, for instance, Shakespeare’s Forest of Arden and Andrew Marvell’s setting in ‘Gardener upon Gardens’. Though confined and regulated, the milieux described in the early fictional stories offer, in her view, possibilities for individual quests. Without avoiding problematic issues, the stories in which this vibrant ‘green world’ occurs present characters ‘stretching’ their own selves, as well as women working together. Sadly concluding that these tales nevertheless embody the ‘conflicts, opportunities, pains, and joys of the as yet uncompleted movement toward women’s equality and self-determination’, Marchalonis regards subsequent books in this vein – her examples are from several girls’ series – as beginning a movement towards the dissolution of the promising early ‘green world’.¹⁴

Analysing girls’ series and women’s stories from the perspectives of class and gender, Sherrie A. Inness also expresses a comparatively pessimistic attitude to fictional as well as actual conditions at college seen from a feminist viewpoint (even up to the 1990s). She claims, for instance, that ‘domestic complacency’ was in fact ‘gaining momentum’ from 1890 onwards. Focusing on the social roles of women students 1895–1910, Inness argues that specific issues in college stories at the time – crushes, women’s sports, class distinctions, and college spreads, for instance – constructed the ‘college girl’, and

¹² Marchalonis, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3, 36, and 178.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179/4, 24–27, and 91–114.

that those 'representational strategies' influenced 'social reality'.¹⁵ In that respect she is obviously in accordance with Gordon: rather than expressing 'truths', as Marchalonis suggests they do, college stories contain, according to Inness, characters who are reduced to 'stereotypical representations of the college woman', having few characteristics in common with any live student at the time. As will be seen from my presentation of the protagonists in the four novels I have examined in detail, I find most of the protagonists in these books quite complex and interesting characters, who develop increasing insights about themselves and the world in the course of their education. The protagonists in the college novels are introduced in chapter three; though some college-girl characters have traits in common, I have seen few examples of Inness's stereotypes. (However, I have not concentrated on series books.) Similarly, though the stories are structured chronologically, at times interrupted by flashbacks, Inness's term 'formulaic' does not seem warranted to me. Nor can I agree with Inness when, quoting John G. Cawelti, she argues that the setting in these stories is 'an ideal world ... without the disorder, the ambiguity, the uncertainty, and the limitations of the world of our experience'. In Inness's opinion, too, the lives of fictional college girls are 'more exciting' and 'more benevolent' than the situation of real-life girl students actually was. Again, Inness's impressions are not borne out by my research; while her views are applicable to the lives depicted in series books, many characters in women's college stories suffer and feel lost because they have left the safe haven of a home – in *Daddy-Long-Legs* even the orphanage – in which they would have remained if college had not been available to them. In some short stories, students do not experience any excitement whatsoever.¹⁶

Even so, I share Inness's opinion when she writes that at a time when women's colleges were a more or less closed area for those who did not work and study there, 'the mediated account rather than the experiential account ... [may have been] influential in constituting a public image' of them.¹⁷ What components went towards making up that 'public image' depends, of course, on the individual reader's point of view. In her discussion about American women's novels published from 1820 to 1870, Nina Baym writes

¹⁵ In an earlier, unpublished doctoral dissertation about short stories in magazines, Donald Makosky makes a less tantalizing but similar claim: the 'values in popular fiction correspond to those of the general culture because this fiction has a genuine function in the mass society: it participates in the vital business of creating public images'; 'The Portrayal of Women in Wide Circulation Magazine Short Stories', 1966, ciii. I found this item in Linda L. Mather, 'The Education of Women: Images from Popular Magazines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 1–5, 19.

¹⁶ Inness, 8, 19, 18, 11, and 13. (Inness quotes from pp. 13 and 38 in John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance; Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

that it is 'difficult to speak of stories like these and their "message" without having one's discourse biased by ideology.'¹⁸ That view is highly relevant to perceptions of college fiction – indeed to most kinds of fiction – as well. As the discussions in this study will show, women's college stories can be read in very different ways. My opinion of the 'public images' mediated by them is much more appreciative than those conveyed by Inness and Gordon. I see encouraging signs of young women attempting to come to terms with contradictory demands from family, society, college, and friends. While mastering intellectual demands and meeting deadlines, they take part in athletic and literary competitions, learn to work with, help, and accept one another, decorate their rooms, and make plans for the future, to mention just a few of their activities.

True, college characters are generally more pragmatic than radical when contemplating their future. Nevertheless, they express interest in various fields, as is exemplified by Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* when she writes that women are interested in clothes and 'babies or microbes or husbands or poetry or servants or parallelograms or gardens or Plato or bridge'.¹⁹ But is it really safe to say that writers consciously chose to avoid issues that, a century later, are thought to be necessary for women to engage with because those writers formed part of a 'socially hegemonic ideology' which aimed at preserving college-educated women within the 'bourgeois', feminine sphere, as Inness argues? At any rate, it seems reasonable to believe that college stories were in great demand partly because they provided images of educational institutions of which few people had any actual experience, partly because they were simply entertaining. In that they resemble the earlier 'woman's fiction' whose great popularity at that time Baym attributes to interest in an amusing plot and in characters who display satisfactory ways and means of coping with life.

General aspects on the fictional material

Some twenty years after the first students arrived at Vassar College, fictional accounts of student life at institutions of this kind were introduced on the market. They were never as numerous as non-fictional texts informing about or debating higher education for women; but there was a steady flow of them, peaking around the turn of the century when a number of short-story collections were published whose titles advertised the names of existing col-

¹⁸ Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870*, 2nd edn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 17.

¹⁹ Webster, 1912/1995, 130.

leges: Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, and Bryn Mawr. The genre reached an all-time-high – in respect to long-term sales and in other respects as well – with Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*.

When speculating about why these books were written, I have found several and at times contradictory aspirations to be relevant. One stated aim was to undermine a general opinion that saw the 'college girl' as a stereotype: indeed, some writers began by expressing this goal. Accordingly, as the present book shows, characters represent different kinds of students as being, among other things, noticeably athletic, naïve, shy, or self-assured. They may be clever in specific areas such as writing, literature, and – in exceptional cases – mathematics. For certain characters, college is just something one does as a matter of course, whereas some know exactly why they are at college: either they want to be equipped for earning a living, or they feel that they need to satisfy priorities and interests which differ from those that other girls have at home. Other, usually well-to-do, students see college as the lesser evil compared to marriage or the society activities to which their mothers devote much time. Furthermore, it is clear that the stories embodied an element of information in the specific period. It seems evident that the fictional texts satisfied a curiosity prevalent in society at large: few people gained entrance to a college for women, and the stories consequently provided a mediated account of what might go on in there. At the same time, they would lend a measure of assistance to the recruitment of future students.

For that reason, one may suspect that another factor underlying this kind of literature was a desire to allay anxieties regarding – to name a few concerns – the girl student's health, behaviour, and apprehended transformation from a graceful, feminine creature into a 'mannish' spectre. An educated woman, these stories seem to say, will not automatically abstain from marrying, or be a failure on the marriage market. Nor will all of her kind lose interest in children or the capacity to bear them. The authors clearly aimed to combine that informative 'mission' with an alluring description of college as a place in which girls could discover their intellectual potential and mental strength while enjoying congenial company. In addition, the graduate writer was in all likelihood glad to revisit a particularly exciting period in her life, sharing her memories with other alumnae readers. Finally, in stories where the protagonist manages to get a text published, she is shown to have succeeded because she wrote about what was familiar to her. Similarly, the college-story writers drew on their academic experience when attempting to apply the writing skills they had trained so carefully in the course of their higher education.

These women's college stories – novels, story collections, and short stories

in magazines, of which I have found some thirty titles in all – did not exist in a void. About the same number of men's college narratives were published in the same period before the First World War, while a number of juvenile college series, intended for girls or boys respectively, came out from the first years in the twentieth century. New ones continued to appear well into the roaring twenties and even thirties.

When reading the stories a hundred years and more after they were published, it is not possible to assess the reader response at the time, apart from what transpires in reviews. However, it seems reasonable to assume that college stories took part in the daily discourse in which a welter of contemporary non-fictional texts focused on higher education for young women and on the college girl as such: articles debated controversial aspects; accounts told of actual experiences; several informative reports were printed about colleges; advice and reassuring comments were provided in widely-read journals; and curricula, syllabi, and prospectuses outlined the details concerning higher education for girls. College stories are seldom mentioned in such non-fictional sources, whereas the fears voiced by the authors of non-fictional texts are often addressed in the fictional ones.

I am aware that the relationship between fiction and historical context is a deeply problematic one, and it is not the purpose of this study to establish any kind of 'influence'. However, as the ensuing discussions will show, the fictional texts undoubtedly contain ideas, attitudes, and information also found in other context-related materials: views and arguments debated in newspapers and magazines surface in the tales, and hints are given about what areas the young women study, how they work, and how they are examined. In addition, ideas voiced in *The Princess* recur both in contributions to the contemporary debate in America and in women's college fiction. It has therefore been fruitful to investigate how college stories relate to Tennyson's poem as well as to non-fictional sources of the time.

The college stories on which this book is based can be seen as falling into either of the two following categories. There are those that were read at the time and are now, on the whole, forgotten; and there are the books written by L.M. Montgomery and Jean Webster, which have been continuously reprinted and read, even watched – *Daddy-Long-Legs* and the Anne series were filmed, staged and/or televised throughout the twentieth century. In her study of the governess novel, Cecilia Wadsö Lecaros draws attention to the minor/major dichotomy within that genre.²⁰ She found that minor fiction was related to issues on the agenda at the time in which it was read, while its fictional frame was of less significance. Similarly, Shirley Marchalonis writes

²⁰ Cecilia Wadsö Lecaros, *The Victorian Governess Novel* (Lund University Press, 2001), 13.

that popular stories reflect the 'preoccupations and the attitudes of the immediate present'. When they change, that kind of literature usually fails to attract readers.²¹ Even though my personal commitment to teaching and student development has meant that I have found much of great interest in books now out of print, I realize that many of the stories I have read during my research fall into this category: minor fiction popular in a specific period. On some points, they are definitely obsolete. But these tales have turned up much food for thought, not only with regard to education. In that sense, they have testified to the ability of fiction to expand the world of the reader when read for wider reasons than that of mere entertainment. They have certainly expanded mine.

James D. Hart's remarks on the impressions left by popular literature in the concluding paragraphs of his *The Popular Book*, written half a century ago, are highly relevant to the present work. They sum up the views outlined above in the following manner:²²

The book that time judges to be great is occasionally also the book popular in its own period; but, by and large, the longer-lived work reflects the demands of the moment only in the most general sense. Usually the book that is popular pleases the reader because it is shaped by the same forces that mold his non-reading hours, so that its dispositions and convictions, its language and subject, re-create the sense of the present, to die away as soon as that present becomes the past. Books of that sort generally are unreadable for succeeding ages; but like other fragments of the past, they help form the present. The volumes themselves may gather dust on library shelves, but they have left lasting impressions on the American mind, etched deeply into a national consciousness.

In the case of higher education as described in college stories, I have found that the presentation of it in these tales has something to say to other minds besides the 'American' one mentioned by Hart. The image of higher education conveyed by the classic college story remains interesting to anyone who cares about academic development even in the twenty-first century.

The 'progressive' period

The four books selected for in-depth analysis were published in each of the four decades before and after the turn of the nineteenth century. During that period, women's colleges were fairly new and controversial institutions in America, and most college stories for women were written at this time. Popular and widely read, they are closely connected to progressive tendencies in society at large. With reference to this phase in American history, the

²¹ Marchalonis, 2.

²² James D. Hart, *The Popular Book* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1950), 281.

word 'progressive/progressivism' is a term with specific connotations. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains it as follows: 'Progressivism was the response of various groups to problems raised by the rapid industrialization and urbanization that followed the Civil War.' Slums had been generated, to a large extent populated by the huge number of immigrants from predominantly eastern and southern Europe flowing past the Statue of Liberty. The influx of new citizens formed an impoverished workforce, many of them with little or no formal education.

Settlement houses were established, and 'economists, sociologists, and political scientists' attempted to construct a 'new ideology to justify democratic collectivism'.²³ An awareness of social issues arose and spread in North America, and those issues are present in the college fiction of the period, especially in Jean Webster's stories. The Vassar College Settlements Association was founded in 1891, and in the following year sociology was introduced as an academic subject in its own right.

Forces in society thus grew concerned about the increasing insecurity among Americans, social misery being perceived as a threat to the noble ambitions of the young nation. The college tales therefore raise issues of contemporary societal significance when focusing on the social aspects of the girls' education. That women students, in fact as well as in fiction, became involved in the progressive movement may seem to confirm views about those characteristics that were generally assumed to be particularly feminine. Working to improve the conditions of less fortunate citizens can on the one hand be regarded as a kind of 'domestic' caring, albeit on a large and extended scale, and certainly as an expression of charity when performed intermittently and without remuneration. However, the awakened interest among students in this sphere, an interest which matured into graduates' plans for future employment in it, actually signifies the beginning of independent, professional careers for women in a fast-growing field. Jean Webster's *Dear Enemy* is a striking example of this development.

The college 'girl' and 'higher education'

In contemporaneous texts of different kinds, a college student is often referred to as a 'girl'. When Sally Mitchell discusses the concept in *The New Girl*, she defines it as denoting a character who is 'no longer a child, not yet a (sexual) adult',²⁴ which is an apt description of most student characters in college fiction. Mitchell investigated conditions in England, but her con-

²³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 29, 1986, 250. Hereafter this encyclopaedia is cited as *NEB*.

²⁴ Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880–1915* (New York: Columbia University Press: 1995), 3.

tention seems valid for America, too: from 1865 onwards a space was freed for young women in between two family homes, the one they grew up in and the next one which society at large expected them to create. College allowed them to enjoy a degree of independence which had so far been denied them.²⁵ According to OED, moreover, the word 'girl' actually refers to all unmarried women, a definition which certainly applies to story characters.²⁶ Attempting to remove any ambiguous connotations from the word, Marchalonis claims that when fiction and commentaries of the time called 'their subjects "girls"', the word denoted more of 'a stage in female development' than a decided value judgement. She goes on to develop her view of the concept as follows:²⁷

[T]he term in context is not one of belittlement, but a definition of an age and status group: young and unmarried, characterized by innocence, unworldliness, virginity, and youthful freshness. The girls in this fiction are going to be women, but they are not there yet.

Lynn D. Gordon holds the opposite view, maintaining that the use of 'college girls' as a designation for young females in popular literature was in fact a kind of belittlement – an attempt at softening 'the disturbing image of educated women'. When she looks at historical records and some few college texts, she finds the dominant characteristic among the fictional portraits to be 'fun-loving', a trait which seems to prove her point.²⁸ As my investigation will show, however, the bulk of women's college stories actually have more to say about education, ethical and intellectual, than about mere girlish larks.

In this book, I use 'college girl' alternating with 'young woman' and (where appropriate) 'student character' quite simply to achieve some variety. In this context, I regard 'college girl' as a set expression referring to a female student in higher education. As will be seen, however, I argue that the use of 'little girl' is specifically connected with the juvenile readership which writers of series books had in mind.

What, then, should be understood by 'higher education'? The term 'education' is a wide-ranging one. As defined in OED, it means both 'bringing up' juveniles – manners and attitudes forming integral parts – and giving systematic instruction relevant either to a specific kind of life or to a particular subject. 'Higher' stands for 'academic'. In the American institutions which form the setting for the college stories of the relevant period, that means the liberal-arts variant. In these fictional accounts, no student character is educated for a specific trade or profession; nevertheless, the tales – especially those

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁶ An exception is a young woman in Goodloe's *College Girls*; she married in secret before college, which is a step she regrets. See 'The College Beauty', 189–201.

²⁷ Marchalonis, 7.

²⁸ Gordon, 1987, 215.

written by women – usually end with seniors talking about what to work with in society in the future. Elements in contemporary ‘higher education’ for fictional young women range from instruction in manners and debates on attitudes to deepening insights in various subjects and challenging intellectual tasks, which help them develop a greater understanding of themselves. It is a truism that the goal of advanced studies of any kind is to further knowledge and skills as well as to promote personal development. One aim that keeps recurring in educational documents from the early days at Vassar to *The American College* of 1962 – a volume whose discussions of student development I have found extremely useful throughout my research – consists in increasing the student’s capacity for ‘thought’, and that progression is fictionalized in the four novels I have analysed.

The Bildungsroman

While the fictional characters in the first three of the novels I have studied closely are seen to develop intellectually, socially, and mentally largely thanks to their interaction with faculty and peers, it is Webster’s protagonist in *Daddy-Long-Legs* who makes the most wearisome educational journey. The all-inclusive German concept ‘Bildung’ is a useful designation for her college education, both with regard to its parts and to the sum of those parts – not least her increasing capacity for self-reflection.

Shirley Marchalonis argues that women’s college fiction belongs to the genre of ‘domestic fiction’²⁹ (a classification which I question in chapter three), whereas Sherrie A. Inness claims that college stories for girls belong under the generic heading *Bildungsroman*, a view also implied in Zilboorg’s article. Inness’s contention is based on the typical structure of an ordinary and complete college tale: ‘the central character starts off as a naive freshman and matures into a knowledgeable senior, ready to face the outside world.’³⁰ Though a reasonably tenable generalization, the formula is not without exceptions; as will be seen below, there are characters who do not mature along those lines. Interestingly, although Marchalonis writes that all college fiction – particularly *Daddy-Long-Legs* – points to ‘the transformational power of college’, she does not arrive at the same conclusion as Inness.³¹

What characterizes a *Bildungsroman* has been discussed by many scholars, usually from a male perspective.³² In general terms, the theme of such a

²⁹ Marchalonis, 18, 28, and 89–90.

³⁰ Inness, 11.

³¹ Marchalonis, 61.

³² See, for instance, John O. Lyons, *The College Novel in America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), 69; Jeffrey L. Sammons, who connects the term *Bildungsroman* with the American liberal-arts education in ‘The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists’ in James Hardin, ed., *Reflection and Action: Essays on the*

'novel of development' should be the formative years of a young person who tests the validity of norms, questions the quality of opinions, challenges any restraints on his existence, and finally reorients himself. Usually that character is moved from one milieu to others in which he is confronted with social and intellectual unfamiliarity.

Feminist scholars argue that the pattern offered by women's fiction of how a female protagonist develops is different and less attractive. In their introduction, the editors of *Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* point to what they see as the basic divergence: '... while male protagonists struggle to find a hospitable context in which to realize their aspirations, female protagonists must frequently struggle to voice any aspirations whatsoever.'³³ It is easy to agree with this contention, which is certainly valid for the texts analysed in *Voyage In*. College fiction, however, primarily provides various aspects on higher education and discusses how characters are influenced by it. By definition it is about four formative years, a period in the heroines' lives during which they are severed from society. These stories end when young women are on their way back into that society, to face the specific demands and restrictions we realize are in store for them as females. This fiction contains little information as to how they are going to react to these challenges. However, it underlines, over and over again, that in the academic environment a college girl acquires a variety of tools which will help her in her future life. She has, for instance, learnt to argue for her beliefs and have faith in her own capacity.

This is particularly true of Webster's two novels, *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Enemy*. Judy and Sallie are both moved to unfamiliar environments in which they must form new opinions because they go through novel experiences; by questioning existing attitudes, they are seen to reorient themselves away from the persons they were when the stories began. The two 'journeys' are reversed: Judy moves from the orphanage to college and Sallie from college and high society to the orphanage. Like Judy, Sallie looks back on her life towards the end of the novel, realizing that she has developed a more mature, socially aware personality – an educational feat which would have been as impossible for her as for Judy, unless they had been lifted out of their ordinary surroundings and challenged to make and abide by responsible decisions. To use Elaine Ginsberg's summary of another novel: in the alien milieu they both journey toward 'self-awareness, maturity, and womanhood'.³⁴

Bildungsroman (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 26–45 (41); and John Anthony Cuddon, who defines the concept in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd rev. edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 88.

³³ *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, edited by Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland (London University Press of New England, 1983), 6–7.

³⁴ Elaine Ginsberg, 'The Female Initiation Theme in American Fiction', *Studies in American Fiction*, 1975–1976, 27–38 (34).

Outline of the present study

My project aims at investigating how education, taken in a wide sense, is presented in the kind of fiction which came into existence in the wake of the new female colleges.

Chapter one focuses on the historical context, with special emphasis on attitudes to highly educated women in the North America of the 'progressive' era. Contemporaneous notions concerning femininity and desirable womanly characteristics are defined; they will be shown to have constituted part of the grid of the fictional college stories. Girls' and women's access to education is explored, the liberal-arts concept analysed, and the curriculum of Vassar College towards the turn of the nineteenth century presented. Ideas about what a college education should achieve are examined from two main viewpoints: the one employed by contemporary Marion Talbot, a prominent debater of higher education for women at the relevant time, and that of scholars who co-operated with Nevitt Sanford in the 1960s. While Talbot primarily had women students as a group in mind, Sanford *et al.* focused on the individual student. This chapter ends with an examination of the prospects that a graduate could look forward to.

Chapter two centres on factual aspects of the college fiction, exploring the characteristics of the various stories and introducing the writers who wrote the stories on which this book concentrates. Contemporary reviews are quoted, and an attempt is made to define the readership of the period. Finally I discuss Tennyson's long poem *The Princess*, emphasizing the views on women's education and character development contained in it – views repeatedly revisited in the next two chapters.

Chapters three and four concentrate on the college stories and on the elements of higher education they contain. The third chapter introduces settings and protagonists. Furthermore, I investigate situations and expressions which seem especially pertinent to a kind of education which catered for women as a group, and to their traditional roles in society. The fourth addresses the nuts and bolts of the academic education, campus activities, and students' ensuing individual development, Judy's transformation being analysed in some detail. Chapter four ends with future plans and occupations as presented in fiction, with an emphasis on a story in *The Ladies' Home Journal* and on *Dear Enemy*.

The book ends with some concluding remarks in which I sum up my impressions of education as presented in women's college fiction.

The college titles I have located throughout my investigation (men's and women's college stories as well as college series books) can be found in the

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Appendix, which covers a large number of the relevant fictional texts from 1876 onwards in chronological order. As will be seen, I claim that the particular subgenre I focus on reaches its climax and then begins to peter out in the 1910s. Nevertheless, the Appendix also provides an overview of the series titles published well into the 1930s and includes a late male story because of its interesting introduction, which is highly relevant to men's college fiction. I also provide short introductions to those stories that I have read, which make up the majority. Many of these fictional works are quite difficult to find, and a compilation of this kind should save time for those future scholars who will, I hope, enter the fascinating realm of college fiction in the years ahead.

1

The American girl and her education: a historical review from the mid-1800s to the First World War

What are her employments? To her is entrusted the education of her children; ... [t]he learning of women, like that of men, should be confined to instruction connected with their duties ...

François Fénelon, *The Education of Girls*, 96.¹

In the second half of the nineteenth century, single-sex colleges began to provide academic education for young women, allowing individuals of the so-called gentle sex to develop their brains more than their nurturing skills and to do so outside the protection and supervision supplied by home and family. From having been taught reading and woman's traditional chores at home, girls had gradually gained access to co-educational grammar schools and high schools as well as to the single-sex institutions called 'academies' and 'seminaries'. Before the rise of the female colleges, some few dedicated women could even study at co-educational universities – at Oberlin College from 1837, for example, and at Antioch College from 1857 – where, however, they often suffered adversity and insecurity because of their gender.²

During half a century, beginning in the 1870s, a number of college stories were published in America. This book focuses on the question of what elements of education – academic as well as social, moral, and mental – are present in those tales which were set in a female college environment. The majority of these tales were published a generation or two after the new academic institutions for women came into being. In most cases they were written by graduates who had experienced the liberal-arts education offered by

¹ *De l'éducation des filles* was published in 1678. The Library of Congress holds copies of Fénelon's *Treatise on the Education of Daughters*, published in 1805, 1821, and 1831. Kate Lupton M.A. translated it as *The Education of Girls* (Boston: Ginn, 1891).

² For more information, see Charlotte Williams Conable, *Women at Cornell: The Myth of Equal Education* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977). Carroll Smith-Rosenberg refers to Conable's findings in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 251.

women's colleges. This particular kind of schooling and its outcome were frequently debated in the society of which they formed a part. For obvious reasons – to do with race, for instance, or expenditure, aptitude, and attitude – access to higher education was an exclusive option, and not only for girls. But the numerous arguments for and against partaking in it which were published in that period referred almost exclusively to the female sex. Overwhelmingly, they can be traced back to widely embraced opinions which took for granted a strict divide between male and female characteristics and capacities; in the words of Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, women's higher education ³

challenged the West's traditional basis for gender differentiation. Since classical Greece, men had insisted that man represented the mind, woman the body, man the creative principle, woman the reproductive impulse, man the heaven-born aspect of human nature, woman its earth-bound component.

The debate of the time focused on what a 'real' girl/woman should be like, on her 'constitutional differences', and on her natural occupations, her constitution and function being seen in relation to those of men.⁴ By no means did those issues originate in the USA. Nor are they restricted to that particular period and country, as the opening quotation from a seventeenth-century French text illustrates (it should be noted that the quoted translation was published in America when Vassar College was educating its second generation of students). In late-nineteenth-century America, however, the existence of female colleges as well as of university co-education brought particular apprehensions to the fore: there were fears that academic enlightenment for women would threaten the status quo of gendered stability, fears referred to by Smith-Rosenberg as 'small-town America's resistance to change'.⁵ Even though most of these initial anxieties which female colleges gave rise to had evaporated by the middle of the twentieth century, Mabel Newcomer found that one question was still controversial after a century of women's higher education: should a girl be educated in the same manner as a young man?⁶

My focus is thus on 'higher education', a concept whose definition encompasses many components. This chapter looks at factors that concern higher education in general and women's gradual access to it; it also presents

³ Smith-Rosenberg, 258.

⁴ 'Constitutional differences' was used by Vassar President John Howard Raymond in 'The Demand of the Age for a Liberal Education for Women, and How It Should Be Met', in James Orton, ed., *The Liberal Education of Women: The Demand and the Method. Current Thoughts in America and England* (NY: A.S. Barnes, 1873), 27–57 (33).

⁵ Smith-Rosenberg, 261.

⁶ Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for American Women* (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 2–3.

attitudes expressed in contemporaneous and widely disseminated non-fictional texts which appeared alongside a large number of college-story publications. Studying women's college fiction from 1886 onwards, I draw on those sources as well as on scholarly and literary works from later periods. Looking for college material, I chose to concentrate on Vassar College.⁷ It was the earliest college for women and known for concentrating on writing skills; and the first and the last college story about women students discussed in this book were written by Vassar graduates Helen Dawes Brown and Jean Webster, respectively. In contemporary newspapers and magazines, all kinds of opinions about higher education for women are richly represented, and a number of them are drawn into discussions below. Furthermore I make use of views taken from texts of the time, in which graduates attempt to explain the aims of college education to students and parents. Finally, taking a leap in time I draw on the work of scholars who wrote in the second half of the 1900s and attempted to define and analyse the core of learning and higher education. As my presentation will show, those more recent scholarly discussions are abundantly anticipated in the early college fiction.⁸

Femininity and education

Two issues were inseparable from the question of whether individuals of the female sex should be 'let loose' on intellectual endeavours, and the college stories often touch on them. One issue was whether education would be suitable for a woman or desex/unsex her, thereby blurring the distinct differences in deportment and attitude between men and women. Those differences were seen by quite a few debaters as forming a basis for the stable and continued existence of American society, whose inhabitants had first met the challenge of defining their country as an independent republic and then gone through a harrowing Civil War and its aftermath. The other issue was orientated towards the future, but addressed similar concerns: how would a young woman's education affect herself, her family, and the nation, if she trained skills other than those pertaining to household and child-care? This section focuses on opinions which entailed to opposition to women's gaining access to intellectual challenges, and to subsequent careers, on terms that were – at least in theory – equal for the two sexes.

⁷ Vassar Female College was founded in 1861 and opened in 1865. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of the widely read Godey's *Lady's Book* and an esteemed friend of Matthew Vassar's, disliked 'Female', which was removed from the name in 1866. See Constance Dimock Ellis, ed., *The Magnificent Enterprise: A Chronicle of Vassar College* (Vassar College, 1961), 13.

⁸ See especially Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 'A Brave Girl', vol. 18 (1884), 27–31, 105–11, 169–74, 237–41, 297–303, 361–65; vol. 19 (1884), 2–31; 92–96; 156–62; and Helen Dawes Brown, *Two College Girls* (Boston: Ticknor, 1886).

Woman's place in a man's world

What Carroll Smith-Rosenberg terms the 'West's traditional basis for gender differentiation' has, of course, been debated for centuries. In 1859, an article about girls and education in *The Atlantic Monthly* bore the ironical and deliberately provoking title 'Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?' The writer, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, reviewed women's subordinate position in various countries through the ages, arguing defiantly in his conclusion: 'First give woman, if you dare, the alphabet, then summon her to her career...'.⁹ At that time, many American girls were indeed literate. Nevertheless, the ideas which Jean-Jacques Rousseau put forward in *Émile* in the eighteenth century lent support to opponents of women's higher education both in England and the USA. Rousseau's notions resemble those that Higginson ridiculed. In Elizabeth Seymour Eschbach's words, the originally French vision of gendered roles regarded 'strength, action, and intelligence gained through nature and experience' as characteristics necessary for a man, whereas the woman was seen to be 'governed largely by the natural cycles of pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, and child-rearing'. Time- and strength-consuming phases of that kind barred her from other, in particular intellectual, activities. Consequently, she must rely on the man for support, protection, and extensive knowledge of the 'world'. In return, she was to give service to the superior man.¹⁰

Views similar to those expressed by Rousseau and by writers of English conduct books formed the backbone of American magazine essays, produced for the increasing number of female readers from the end of the eighteenth century. What women learnt from such reading was that they should be delicate, subordinate, and modest, as well as self-effacing.¹¹ The obvious conclusion is that members of the female sex were expected to fulfil themselves by seeing first and foremost to the needs and desires of others.

Womanly characteristics

In 1966, Barbara Welter summarized an influential article by naming a quartet of characteristics for a womanly icon: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.¹² Reading texts written from 1820 to 1860, Welter discovered

⁹ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 'Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1859, 137–50 (150).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Seymour Eschbach, *The Higher Education of Women in England and America 1865–1920* (NY: Garland, 1993), 6–8.

¹¹ In *Men's Ideas/Women's Realities: Popular Science 1870–1915* (NY: Pergamon, 1985), 48, Louise Michele Newman shows how the desired 'delicacy' was interpreted at the time. It implied physical characteristics pertaining to woman's corporeal frailty as well as mental capacities: her moral, aesthetic, and emotional sensitivity should be untainted by any intellectual rigour.

¹² Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860', *American Quarterly* 18, 1966, 151–74 (152).

that all representations of, as well as demands on, female characters drew on these traits, which have points in common with Rousseau's ideas mentioned above. Furthermore, Welter found that Americans of the period considered their daughters to be particularly innocent, especially in matters of sexuality. At the same time, girls were not supposed to be completely ignorant about such matters. However, the advice given in the texts Welter read was vague as to how much information would be beneficial to them and what form it ought to take.¹³

Studying popular literature of the early twentieth century, James R. McGovern discovered similar traits, a persistent 'code of woman's innocence and ignorance'. He claims that they ran parallel to the liberation of manners and morals which was facilitated when women could leave their homes because their chores were taken over by industry and immigrant labour. This irreconcilable duality of liberation and prevailing claims was strong well into the 1920s, according to McGovern.¹⁴

For her article, Welter consulted a variety of contemporaneous texts: women's magazines, gift books, religious tracts and sermons, cookbooks, women's personal writing, and novels. All of them, she realized, contained advice along the same 'virtue' lines. Woman is defined as posited against man. Crossing the borderline between the sexes, she would lose the characteristics of the female sex and then, Welter writes, 'all was ashes. With them [a female being] was promised happiness and power.'

The following paragraph summarizes Welter's analysis. First: Man's world, that is the domain outside the home, was regarded as being 'naughty': a pious woman should guide members of the male sex who were exposed to its vicissitudes, so that they performed morally just actions. Second: There were innumerable ways in which a girl might lose her pure innocence. That aspect was connected with any form of social change, be it of a political or social nature or merely in the guise of a dress reform. Third: In line with Rousseau's assumptions, a female must never give prominence to herself. Welter quotes examples from her material according to which a woman is 'conscious of inferiority', 'grateful for support', and 'clingly dependent', attributes which might just as well have referred to a child. Fourth: a woman's place was where the desired characteristics might be safeguarded – in the home.

As the all-important female task in society was considered to be that of bestowing help, comfort, and moral stability, a true woman was expected to be able to understand her fellow-beings and to dispense calm among them. In

¹³ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁴ James McGovern, 'The American Woman's Pre-World War I Freedom in Manners and Morals', *Journal of American History* No. 2, vol. LV, September 1968, 315–33 (317).

a chaotic and wicked world, the education she was considered to need should therefore primarily teach her how to build an aesthetically pleasing and relaxing haven for a family, be it her own, her brother's, or that of any other relative in need of her. Frances B. Cogan holds that Americans considered women's domestic capacities, including child-rearing and the bestowal of 'spiritual comfort', as 'instinctive' arts.¹⁵ Similar views on woman's proper place were held at the time even by ardent advocates of higher education for women.

If, on the other hand, a woman ventured out into the world, she would be confronted with the same vile conditions as men. Stained in that contact, she would lose not only her innocence but also her capacity for moral guidance. As late as 1905, a woman's magazine contained the following description of how the young woman should be trained: 'And if none are fit to rule but those who have first learned to obey, then the girl who is ever to be worthy of the rulership of a household is best educated in the obedience of a home. No other element in her education has a value quite equal to this.'¹⁶

All these aspects of womanhood influenced the aims and directions of the first female colleges. The idea of a woman's innate nurturing capacity endured. In her discussion about *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, Lynn D. Gordon sets up domesticity, in other words wife/motherhood, as an all-embracing sine qua non for women in the nineteenth century. While 'confining women within the home', Gordon argues, the womanly qualities paradoxically made it possible for them later to leave home and work for the betterment of society.¹⁷

The phrase which sums up the perfect female, a 'womanly woman', became an important concept. Around 1900 the term was often brought up, also when college women argued against the sexual divide. One of them explained how she had failed to find a concrete definition of 'womanly' other than that of an 'old Virginia gentleman' who maintained that 'the essence of womanliness consists in being supported by a man', which is crude but in fact germane to popular ideas of 'womanhood'. Another collegian looked forward to a system in which advice intended for one sex would be used interchangeably at men's and women's colleges, all people being 'far more human than either masculine or feminine'. In her view, 'women could listen to some of the appeals for vigorous living, horror of dishonor, active resistance of temptation; and men could be urged to the cultivation of courtesy,

¹⁵ Frances B. Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 68.

¹⁶ Henry van Dyke, 'The Way to Womanhood', *Harper's Bazar* 39, May 1905, 403–09 (409). See also, for instance, Heloise E. Hersey, 'The Educated Woman of To-Morrow', *The Outlook* 74, 1 August 1903, 837–41.

¹⁷ Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 14.

consideration, and forbearance.' A president of a male college, however, devoted a long chapter to praising 'The Worth of the Womanly Ideal'. He conceded that women might have access to higher education and, if need be, work afterwards; but neither option should be the same as those open to men for the reasons recapitulated above.¹⁸

The epithet 'the womanly woman' is germane to an idea of women that was expressed in an extremely popular English poem. In its time, Coventry Patmore's 'The Angel in the House' (written 1854–1862) had a success comparable to that of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. The traits of a true woman, whom the poet likens to 'The Rose of the World', are identical with those enumerated above. By choosing a classic name for the Virgin Mary, Patmore invested woman with saintly, not to say divine, status claiming that she was '[m]arr'd less than man by mortal fall'.¹⁹ As late as 1909, one Professor D. Collin Wells characterized woman in the same vein. He granted her as much education as was possible, 'not that she may struggle with men but rather that she may the better rule humanity by those qualities and in that sphere in which she is most nearly *divine*' (emphasis added).²⁰ As will be seen, a story which was serialized in *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1909 contained references to Patmore's concept; the writers clearly assumed that it was well known.

These approving epithets coexisted with expressions whose connotations were decidedly unfavourable. One of the most frequent examples is the adjective 'strong-minded'. The first president of Vassar College, Dr John Howard Raymond, was certainly aware of fears that college would produce such women: in May 1865, just before the college opened, the *Prospectus of the Vassar Female College* stated that activities such as debates and oratory would not be allowed, since they were not 'feminine accomplishments'. Woman's mission was not 'to govern or contend'.²¹ Dr Raymond's promise was short-lived, however. Agnes Rogers mentions in passing that two debating societies, 'T and M' and 'Qui Vive', were founded in 1879 and 1882 respectively.²² By 1900 the colleges provided advanced courses in argumentation.²³ The notion expressed by Raymond lingered on, though, as is demonstrated by a debate

¹⁸ C.S. Parrish, 'The Womanly Woman', *The Independent* 53, 14 April 1901, 775–78; Elizabeth Deering Hanscom, 'The Ethical Purpose of a Woman's College', *Educational Review*, October 1901, 307–12 (310); William DeWitt Hyde, *The College Man and the College Woman* (NY: Houghton, Mifflin, 1906), 194–218.

¹⁹ The poem and the information can be found in Erna Olafson Hellerstein *et al.*, eds, *Victorian Women* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 134–40.

²⁰ D. Collin Wells, 'Some Questions Concerning the Higher Education of Women', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1909, 731–39 (739).

²¹ *Prospectus of the Vassar Female College* (NY: C.A. Alvord, 1865), 18. I found this information in Geraldine Jonich Clifford, "'Shaking Dangerous Questions from the Crease": Gender and American Higher Education', *Feminist Issues* 3:2, 1983, 3–62 (17). The writer states, however, that the opinion was voiced by President Charles [sic] Raymond reporting to the Board of Trustees.

²² Agnes Rogers, *Vassar Women: An Informal Study* (NY: Vassar College, 1940), 67.

²³ Kathryn M. Conway, 'Woman Suffrage and the History of Rhetoric at the Seven Sisters Colleges, 1865–1919',

in 1894 for and against co-education at the University of Virginia. The spokesman for the opponents, a male professor, prayed to be spared what he saw as its result: a masculinized woman. Education, he maintained, was bound to make a young woman boisterous, bold, and rudely aggressive when competing with male fellow students.²⁴ To benefit from education a student must, of course, learn to speak out and to form well-founded opinions. The professor obviously thought that men and women should perform such skills in divergent ways. Educated together with men, a girl student would adopt male students' techniques. While the goals defined by the adjectives the professor used were apparently acceptable for male students, they were inadmissible in relation to women. According to one Boyd Winchester, apprehensions connected with the word 'strong-minded' prevailed in 1902. Winchester is a good example of a seeming proponent of the 'New Woman': while welcoming women who were neither timid nor submissive, he emphatically maintained the major divide between the sexes, considering 'thought' to be masculine and 'sentiment' eternally feminine. The American respect for woman, he wrote, would vanish if she failed to realize that 'woman's title to power comes not from self-consciousness and *mannish* assertion' (emphasis added).²⁵

Woman's deportment and appearance

In the different spheres inhabited by men and women, looks and dress codes as well as rules for female behaviour and deportment thus formed the hallmarks of the gender divide. Although some articles in periodicals around the turn of the century raised worries that education would make young men feminized and 'flabby',²⁶ the general concern was with women in education. Articles were frequently imbued with the familiar apprehension that intellectual education would alter a woman, her appearance and manner, from a charming creature into an unattractive copy of a man.²⁷ One writer maintained that Americans still thought 'physical vigor' incompatible with 'mental strength or intellectual achievement.' The mark of a scholar of either sex was supposed to be 'drooping shoulders, pale countenance, and [other]

in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. by Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1995), 203–227 (212).

²⁴ Mary Gathright Newell, 'Mary Munford and Higher Education for Women in Virginia', in *Stepping Off the Pedestal: Academic Women in the South*, ed. by P. A. Stringer (NY: Modern Language Association of America, 1982), 26–38 (33). Newell refers to an unpublished report by Mary E. Whitney & Rebecca S. Wilburn (1969) in Manuscripts Department, Alderman Library, University of Virginia. Heather Moore at Special Collections there confirms an almost accurate quotation from the original faculty minutes in an e-mail dated 9 December 2000. The information about Professor Noah Davies was originally found in Clifford (44).

²⁵ Boyd Winchester, 'The Eternal Feminine: I. The New Woman', *The Arena* 27, April 1902, 367–73.

²⁶ See, for instance, 'Are College Men Becoming "Flabby"', under 'Letters and Art', *The Literary Digest* 42, 8 October 1904, 449.

²⁷ See, for instance, Oscar Chrisman of Ohio University, 'Education for the Home', *The Arena* 30, September

marks of physical deterioration.²⁸ It is not to be wondered at that male college stories tended to focus on activities in sports.

While the second generation were studying at college, however, the image of an attractive and feminine student gradually became popular at the expense of the idea of the worn-out scholar and the mannish spectre. Thus a college girl was described in 1905 as a 'gracious young queen' in her 'little world of college'.²⁹ That characterization was refined and confirmed three years later by drawings in the popular *Ladies' Home Journal*. One of them portrayed feminine seniors dressed in mortarboards floating on top of elegant coiffures and gowns exquisitely draped over their innocently white, frilled, and high-necked dresses. The caption stated that the picture provided 'one last frolicsome farewell to little-girl years'.³⁰ Texts and pictures alike described the student as womanly, her function as decorous, and her education as insignificant: a 'little-girl' in her 'little world'. It is confirmed that college has not marred the student: she is not an independent intellectual but an attractively innocent female.³¹ Her developmental failure is applauded. The contemporary artist Charles Dana Gibson's drawings were of great importance. Illustrating short stories in magazines and, for instance, Goodloe's *College Girls* (1895), they are said to have defined the American ideal of femininity at the turn of the century. Lynn D. Gordon argues that a college girl was generally imagined to be a type of Gibson Girl: 'lively, healthy, and energetic'.³² In Goodloe's volume, however, elegant young ladies more than 'athletic maidens, simply dressed' abound. (Jean Webster's drawings illustrating *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912), refreshing and humorous as they are, are a far cry from those in *College Girls* and from Fisher's graciously languid figures.)

The Ladies' Home Journal was the first magazine in the United States to have one million subscribers. Therefore the messages it conveyed should be able to tell a modern reader a good deal about attitudes in retrospect. Every other number of *The Ladies' Home Journal* mentioned college girls and the reasons are obvious. Entertaining information was provided about frolics,

1903, 401–09; van Dyke, 1905; Lyman Abbott, 'The Advance of Women', *The World's Work* 8, July 1904, 5033–38 (5037–38); Charles William Eliot of Harvard University, 'The Higher Education for Women', *Harper's Bazar* 42, June 1908, 519–22; Wells, 1909.

²⁸ Marion Talbot, 'Present-Day Problems in the Education of Women', *Educational Review* 14, 1897, 248–58 (252).

²⁹ Howard Chandler Christy, *The American Girl* (NY: Moffat, Yard, 1905), 50 and 21.

³⁰ Drawings by Harrison Fisher in *The Ladies' Home Journal* (hereafter cited as *LHJ*), 1908.

³¹ Ann Ury Abrams arrived at a similar conclusion: 'beauty and female independence' seemed mutually exclusive; '[n]o woman could possess both'. See 'Frozen Goddess: The Image of Woman in Turn-of-the-Century American Art' in *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History*, ed. by Mary Kelley (Boston: Hall, 1979), 93–108 (95).

³² Lynn D. Gordon, 'The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women's Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890–1920', *American Quarterly* 39, 1987, 211–30 (211).

Harrison Fisher's College Girls

On the first of May each year at several of the colleges for girls the Seniors have a picturesque custom of bidding farewell to the frivolous days of childhood. They don their caps and gowns—evidences of the traditional dignity of "grand old Seniors"—and with great, rolling hoops they race up and down hill and across campus—black gowns and tassels flying—in one last frolicsome farewell to little-girl years.



The College Girl After the May-Day Hoop-Rolling
By Harrison Fisher

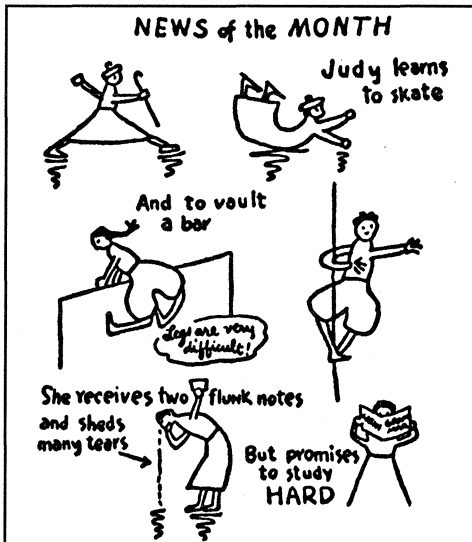
This is the second of a series of brilliant and characteristic studies of the American College Girl at Her Sports and Pastimes, in Her Leisure, and at Her Work, which Mr. Harrison Fisher will contribute to THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL.

One of Harrison Fisher's 'College Girls' in *The Ladies Home Journal*, 1908. By permission of The British Library.

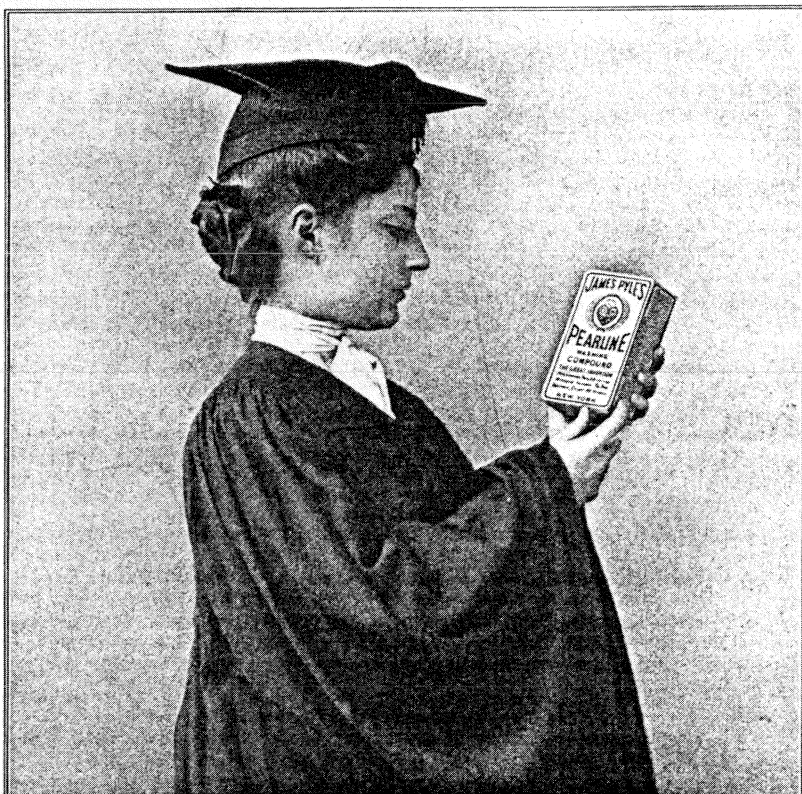
Charles Dana Gibson's illustration of 'Revenge', 163-185, in Abbe Carter Goodloe's *College Girls* (New York: Scribner's, 1895).



"YOU CANNOT IMAGINE HOW ANXIOUS THE GIRLS ARE TO SEE YOU"



One of Jean Webster's own illustrations of *Daddy-Long-Legs* (New York: Century, 1912; repr. Puffin Classics, 1995, 39).



NO INTELLIGENCE REQUIRED

—in the Use of PEARLINE—but in the selection of it—YES! Simply SOAK or BOIL and RINSE—and the Washing is done—that's SIMPLE enough for a child. BUT—to desert the thousand year's old bar-soap-way and to realize that PEARLINE IS MODERN SOAP and to look back on it's thirty years of general use—it's Millions of Users and Friends and Absence of Enemies—there's where Intelligence gets the better of the Dull Ones and accepts the Benefits of PEARLINE.

SOME OF THE MILLIONS OF USERS OF PEARLINE ARE YOUR FRIENDS—ASK THEM

An advertisement in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, 1907.

clothes, pranks, sports, and girlishness, whereas it was often pointed out (as a positive factor) that the girls seemed untainted by scholarly endeavours. Two advertisements for Pearline Soap underlined that message: in 1904 the picture showed a young woman in cap and gown holding up the promoted package, the accompanying text implying that the girl student was intelligent merely because she had selected that specific brand. In 1907, the capitalized first line, the one which was certain to catch the reader's eye, cried out that NO INTELLIGENCE [was] NEEDED when using the detergent. The patronizing implications as to what qualities a college education developed are that while a woman with a trained intellect could be trusted to know which detergent to choose, that was as far as it went. Some articles, however, belied such messages while remaining focused on the domestic sphere: a year later, a graduate writer spoke of how she struggled in her home to make ends meet, maintaining that the knowledge and skills learnt at college helped her to plan and perform her work more effectively.³³

Other articles in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, published from 1895 to 1916 and focused on young women's higher education, are often biased in opposite directions in accordance with the sex of the individual contributor. Male writers contended that a traditional college education was of no use to a woman and her domain of home and family (May 1895, March 1899, June 1900, April 1903, January 1908, January 1910). Women tended to challenge general prejudice and/or discuss how colleges might improve (July 1899, November 1904, October 1905, June 1906, February 1912, June 1916). Two female writers agree with the men that college fails to prepare the girl for home (July 1900, September 1910).

Control and guidance

Genetically designed to be a paragon of virtue, a woman could not afford to slip; she would then be flawed and incapable of 'guiding' men and boys. Conversely, the latter were expected to err while developing a strong and moral character from experience and superior womanly advice. As will be shown below, college stories set in male and female colleges confirm the dichotomy seen in much non-fictional writing about higher education: while young men students were expected to 'kick over the traces' now and then, such behaviour was unthinkable for a female college student.

Females must be guided and trained so as not to invite criticism. Home and family should supply that education. When girls substituted an educational institution for the safe area, the latter consequently had to act *in loco parentis*. By contrast with boys, young females in residential schools endured

³³ 'A College Girl's Experience as a Wife, as Told by Herself', *LHJ*, October 1905, 42.

supervision in their spare time; they were also coached in social graces. Such surveillance and tuition were seen as pertaining specifically to the education of the gentle sex; they appear in fiction and are occasionally smiled at by the narrator or by a protagonist. When colleges for women were planned, founders looked to the already existing female institutions (academies and seminaries), whose leaders had taken precautions to support their assurances to parents that their 'delicate' girls would be as socially controlled and educated in a 'womanly' fashion as they would have been at home – the most important aspect of this surveillance being the intimate relationships that developed between teachers and students who lived and worked together.³⁴ Similarly, the founders of the all-female colleges informed parents and students that apart from the academic standard of the courses, which was to be equal to that which applied for men, feminine qualities would be honoured at the new institutions. In this effort they were aided by Sarah Hale, who attempted to persuade the readers of the influential magazine *Godey's Lady's Book* 35 – 150,000 copies in 1865 – that 'elegance and education might be harmonious'.³⁶

The first founder, Matthew Vassar, harboured anxieties about his enterprise and expressed them in questions to the same Sarah Hale, who was a personal friend: 'Best means of aesthetic culture? How much the art of Conversation? Should Dancing be encouraged?'³⁷ Furthermore, although those particular plans did not materialize, he intended Moral Science at his new college to focus on filial, conjugal, and parental relations, aims which seem to lean towards instruction for girls about their proper place.³⁸

The presidents of the first two colleges for women, John H. Raymond and Clark L. Seelye, expressly promised to safeguard the student's womanliness. The latter defined it vaguely as 'those innate capacities which have ever been the glory and charm of true womanhood'.³⁹ (The remarkable exception

³⁴ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*, 2nd edn (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 4 and 17.

³⁵ Sarah Josepha Hale had begun publishing *The American Ladies' Magazine* and *Literary Gazette* two years before Louis A Godey introduced *The Lady's Magazine* in 1830. When her magazine was acquired by Godey, Hale edited the joint venture, *Godey's Lady's Book*, until 1877. I found the information on 13 June 2004 on <http://cit.uvm.edu>

and on

http://search.eb.com/women/articles/Godey's_Lady's_Book.html.

³⁶ The quotation is from *The American College Girl: Her College and Her Ideals*, by Ten American College Girls (Boston: Page, 1930), 249–50. In addition, the volume contains detailed information about what was forbidden at Mary Lyon's seminary, for instance speaking 'above a whisper' in the halls (69). Furthermore, Horowitz writes that the system at Mount Holyoke mirrored the mental 'asylum regime' of strict outer order (emphasis added). See 14 and 32.

³⁷ In *I'm Radcliffe! Fly Me!: The Seven Sisters and the Failure of Women's Education* (NY: Macmillan, 1976), 7–8, whose writer Liva Baker located this information in Rogers, 50.

³⁸ Newcomer, 79. She quotes *verbatim* what Vassar said at his first meeting with the Board of Trustees.

³⁹ I found this quotation in Lois W. Banner, *Women in Modern America: A Brief History* (NY: Harcourt Brace

among the Seven Sisters⁴⁰ in this respect was Bryn Mawr, whose curriculum 'made no genuflections to women's special nature or domestic future', writes Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz.⁴¹

At Vassar, a special 'adaptation to womanly circumstances and womanly wants' would preserve a female student from any 'unseemly assumption of offices or *manners* which belong appropriately to the other sex' (emphasis added).⁴² Chapel exercises and silent meditations abounded. Certain sermons expressly upheld the gender divide: in 1877, for instance, a parson compared the Vassar students to a field of lilies in his speech, averring that 'the sole aim of the lily was to minister to the aesthetic nature of the manly oak'.⁴³ Statements of that kind are likely to have left a number of women students feeling as frustrated and annoyed as Jean Webster's protagonist in *Daddy-Long-Legs*.⁴⁴

Hannah Lyman was employed as Vassar's first lady principal; according to Mabel Newcomer she was 'second in importance only to the president', receiving a salary which was double that of the women professors.⁴⁵ Her duties included scrutinizing everything, from the students' morals, manners, and dress down to their visitors and shopping lists. Before this appointment, Miss Lyman had been head of an English boarding school. She was therefore used to supervising, experience which may account for the following scene described by Frances A. Wood: ⁴⁶

[She] came along one morning, joining a young freshman waiting for her class, and taking the girl's arm, paced with her slowly up and down a few times to the student's embarrassed pleasure. Not a word was spoken till the bell struck and Miss Lyman turned to leave, – "My dear, you do not walk quite properly. You should turn your toes out a little more."

A wooden platform might be regarded as an emblem of the lady principal's rectifying function. On it the decency of the students' hems was checked, writes Elaine Kendall who found the information in the Vassar collection of memorabilia.⁴⁷ Women teachers aided the lady principal in this crusade. They had to correct the girls' speech and conduct everywhere at college.⁴⁸

Jovanovich, 1974), 38.

⁴⁰ The Seven College Conference in 1926 included representatives from Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley, colleges which were 'nicknamed almost immediately the Seven Sisters'. Horowitz, 261.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴² Raymond, in *Liberal Education*, ed. by Orton, 35 and 42.

⁴³ Elaine Kendall, 'Peculiar Institutions': *An Informative History of the Seven Sisters* (NY: Putnam's, 1975), 109.

⁴⁴ Jean Webster, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (Century, 1912; repr. Puffin Classics, 1995).

⁴⁵ Newcomer, 112.

⁴⁶ Frances A. Wood, *Earliest Years at Vassar: Personal Recollections* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1909), 39 and 25.

⁴⁷ Kendall, 107. The information can be found in Wood, 23–24.

⁴⁸ Newcomer, 112.

Actually, at the time a majority of voices would rank academic prowess quite low for a woman, to which a statement by M. Carey Thomas, President of Bryn Mawr College, bears witness. In the early days, she said, two male presidents 'both told me that there was an intuitive something in ladies of birth and position, which enabled them to do without college training and to make on the whole better professors for women college students than if they had themselves been to college.'⁴⁹ Miss Lyman would obviously have agreed. She is reported to have enumerated the following requirements for a teacher: 'First she must be a lady; second, she must be a Christian; third, she must have the faculty of imparting knowledge, and lastly, knowledge.'⁵⁰

Woman's health

The endeavours at college to protect the womanliness of students, and the demands in society that college safeguard that womanliness, were consequently evident. In the second half of the nineteenth century, seemingly scientific biological reasons supported the contention that women had better abstain from higher education. The new point of view gave rise to insecurity about how intellectually demanding studies would affect a girl's body, as well as her soul: the effort might endanger not only her mental but also her physical health, even resulting in sterility. Traces of such warnings are present in Vassar's *Prospectus* of May 1865: information about 'physical education' opens the survey of the new institution's educational aspirations. That subject was claimed to be extremely important, both because of woman's 'peculiar delicacy' and because of her health, which was assumed to be of national interest.⁵¹ In her collection of contemporaneous articles from *Popular Science*, Newman points to the paradox which is apparent in many of them, and which I detect in the *Prospectus*, too: '[p]hysical strength and robust health conflicted with middle- and upper-class ideals of feminine beauty emphasizing weakness and delicacy.'⁵²

As an extra security measure, women's colleges boasted the presence of women doctors on campus. There were several reasons for their participation: for one thing, male doctors often opposed female higher education. M. Carey Thomas remembered how a leading Philadelphia physician, Dr S. Weir Mitchell, assured her that no woman could combine health and studies: 'He admitted I looked well but said he was convinced I had some secret dis-

⁴⁹ M. Carey Thomas, 'Present Tendencies in Women's College and University Education', *Educational Review* 35, January 1908, 64–85 (65).

⁵⁰ Wood, 39.

⁵¹ *Prospectus*, 4.

⁵² Newman, 48.

ease that must show itself sooner or later.⁵³ This particular doctor was famous for his rest cures prescribed for 'nervous' women, a treatment he eventually exchanged for increased physical exercises, which had proved their worth in college education.⁵⁴ Although he thus indirectly acknowledged the good results of women's higher education, he did not waver. Thirty years after Vassar College received its first students, he was invited to address the well-educated students of Radcliffe College. Not only did he tell them that the 'tutored brain' of a woman college student might ruin her more commendable 'nobler heart'. He also warned them not to harbour excessive ambition and aim at professional work after college: in both cases they would lose their charm, powers of attraction, and good health. Furthermore, he accused their professors of expecting 'virile standards' from the students – 'virile', of course, carrying mannish overtones. When extracts of his address were published in 1900, he was introduced as being an unquestioned authority on the 'health of American womanhood'.⁵⁵

Dr Mitchell combined ideas about woman's allurements, her natural characteristics, and her place, with notions about her delicate health. In the 1880s, *Popular Science* ran a series of articles, adding fuel to these ideas. They were produced by a New York neurologist, Dr William Hammond, who argued that as female brains are as a rule smaller than men's, it must follow that a woman's intellectual capacities are inferior, forcing her to study more intensely when attempting to meet the same demands as men.⁵⁶ His message ran counter to the experience of educated women: by that time students had proved their intellectual capacity.

However, the most influential argument against women in higher education focused on the indisputable fact that women, not men, bore babies and could yield milk. Those capacities are confirmed by young girls' menstruation, a biological process which was used as a weapon against women's higher education. That debate exploited Darwin's evolutionary theories: the arguments were dressed in seemingly scientific and therefore trustworthy language. Consequently, they gave rise to wide, obviously genuine concern related to the natural process and what it entailed. In essence, though, the arguments against education for women did not differ from, for instance, Rousseau's views. Herbert Spencer, who used Darwin's evolutionary theories as a basis for his article 'Psychology of the Sexes', just supplied what

⁵³ Thomas is quoted in Eschbach, 86.

⁵⁴ Newman, 58.

⁵⁵ S. Weir Mitchell, 'When the College is Hurtful to a Girl', *LHJ*, June 1900, 14. His speech was delivered in 1896. Mitchell's 'rest cure' sent women to bed for long periods of time, when they had no access to books, visitors, or stimulation of any kind. This treatment served 'ultimately to further debilitate them', according to Eschbach, 86.

⁵⁶ Hammond's views are mentioned in Eschbach, 85.

looked like scientific evidence to endorse time-worn opinions. Woman's mind was intuitive, he claimed, and apt to dwell on the personal rather than on the general – in his words, on the 'concrete and proximate rather than on the abstract and remote'. Spencer explained his contention as follows: the inclination towards the personal had developed because woman was biologically prepared for, and had therefore performed, such 'concrete and proximate' duties over the centuries.⁵⁷

In America one Dr Edward H. Clarke gave even wider currency to such ideas. In particular, he asserted that the harmful combination of girls and intellectual work would result in women who had forfeited their chances of pregnancy. Not only would any undergraduate woman become sterile and lose the capacity to suckle; she would suffer further damage. Agreeing with Spencer, Dr Clarke saw the body as a closed energy field upon which both a woman's brain and her reproductive system drew. If a woman then chose to use that energy for studies, her ovaries would wither away, and barrenness would ensue. That was the reason why he asked for a 'fair chance' for girls. His pamphlet, *Sex in Education or A Fair Chance for Girls*, was published in 1873, the year of Spencer's article. At that point Vassar College had eight years of experience, Smith College had opened, and Cornell turned co-educational. Nevertheless, Dr Clarke maintained that higher education would create sterile and sick women. 'Every physician can', he wrote, 'point to students whose splendid cerebral development has been paid for by emaciated limbs, enfeebled digestion, and disordered lungs.'⁵⁸ Girls' intellectual endeavours were therefore dangerous for the future of the nation. Because of woman's important mission in life, she should only be allowed to study for four hours a day and during three weeks out of four, as she needed to rest fully during her monthly period. Since boys could exercise their intellect for six hours a day, men and women had to have different standards in their studies. Influence from attitudes of that kind is apparent in a diplomatic rhetorical question expressed by Vassar President Dr Raymond in 1873: 'Is there not danger of impairing the delicacy and grace, so essential to our ideals of womanhood, and of disqualifying her physical system for the high and sacred offices which God has assigned her in the domestic and social economy?' In answering this and similar questions, he assured parents that their daughters would be perfectly safe at his college.⁵⁹

Dr Clarke claimed to have found evidence supporting his disastrous predictions for college-educated women in case studies of girl students whose health was allegedly ruined after studies at, for instance, Vassar College.

⁵⁷ Spencer's article is reprinted in *Men's Ideas*, ed. by Newman, 17–24 (17 and 23).

⁵⁸ Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education or a Fair Chance for Girls*, 5th edn (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1874), 42.

⁵⁹ Raymond in *Liberal Education* ed. by Orton, 32.

Because his conclusions no longer seemed to rely on considerations of woman's place, but on biological law, and as his ideas confirmed part of the general opinion on femininity, his arguments were widely acknowledged. His book was reprinted no less than seventeen times. Proper research into his so-called truths soon demolished the 'facts' he based them on. In 1874, Mrs Julia Ward Howe edited a volume in which physicians, clergymen, and professors of various colleges questioned the validity of Dr Clarke's case studies, in particular of the patient whose health he claimed had deteriorated when she was a student at Vassar College. Facts and figures were provided which illuminated the benefits of higher education for women's health.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, colleges had to prove their worth in this respect over and over. In Francis A. Wood's recollections (1909), for instance, it is said about an 'honor girl' delivering an excellent speech that 'if she had done nothing more than stand up there and let the people look at her for five or ten minutes, it would have paid, and buried this health discussion forever.'⁶¹

The question whether biological law should indeed determine woman's place seemed to fade away before the turn of the century. Still, reminders of that view are not hard to find. An early twentieth-century survey in *Harper's Bazar* suggested that a girl student's 'body and brain and nerves' (emphasis added) might be jeopardized by the growth of democracy at college.⁶² A Vassar woman certainly attempted to provide a wider perspective on the same issue when she wrote in 1906: 'Woman's health is endangered by a college education! The race is in peril! Man to the rescue! But he raises no great outcry against the millions of women who are working in factories under the most unsanitary conditions.'⁶³ Four years later, in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, the president of Smith College claimed that the liberal culture was 'confidently asserted' to have resulted in healthier women. At the same time, he repeated his earlier promise: the preservation of a young woman's womanliness was the primary aim of his college.⁶⁴

Whether the anxieties regarding the harmful influence of a college education on maternity were ever fully allayed is a dubious matter. Sue Zschoche

⁶⁰ *Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's 'Sex in Education'*, edited by Mrs Julia Ward Howe (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874). The contribution from Vassar's resident physician, Dr Alida C. Avery, is on pages 190–195. Cogan (70) mentions another opponent, one Dr Ely Van De Warker, who 'scathingly' refuted Clarke's contention in the same year in *Popular Science Monthly*. Similarly, Dr Mary Putnam Jacobi argued against the idea of women's constitutional frailty, using 'survey techniques', according to Joyce Antler in *The Educated Woman and Professionalization: The Struggle for a New Feminine Identity 1890–1920* (NY: Garland, 1987), 30–31. In her book, Antler provides information about other responses, based on solid statistics that go against Dr Clarke's claims; see pp. 33–34 and footnote 17 (33).

⁶¹ Wood, 69.

⁶² Alice K. Fallows, 'Self-government for College Girls', *Harper's Bazar* 33, July 1904, 698–705 (703).

⁶³ Daisy Lee Worthington, 'Higher Education for Women', *Educational Review* 32, November 1906, 405–14 (411).

⁶⁴ Seelye is quoted in Banner, 38. His *LHJ* article on page 10 of January 1910 was titled 'What the College Woman Can Do'.

convincingly argues that long after its influence had peaked, the ghost of Clarke's book was still walking. As Zschoche points out, academic women must not only show tenacity in their studies. After Clarke, they always have to prove that they risk neither loss of femininity nor their ability to produce new citizens if they choose to be educated.⁶⁵

Opponents' efforts notwithstanding, female students flocked to colleges and universities: in the second half of the nineteenth century the young woman's space – particularly in education – was gradually redefined, and strict attitudes to what was acceptable for her to do with her life slowly relaxed. As Joseph F. Kett points out, it is a fact that despite Clarke *et al.*, there was a wide acceptance of co-education in high schools, colleges, and universities towards the end of the nineteenth century in America.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the opinions presented in this section kept recurring in non-fictional texts, and they are frequently embraced by student characters in college stories, too. In my analysis, I show how the fictional texts allow for both convincing criticism and resonant ridicule of the traditional claims for womanliness. At the same time, many characters who are initially bent on opposition gradually adapt to them. However, Jean Webster's heroines, and some of Josephine Dodge Daskam's, retain their individuality and resistance to the end. When academic studies became available to girls, they are certain to have suffered from contemporary set demands as regards behaviour and appearance. Other obstacles were initially next to insurmountable for an ordinary young female who wished to make use of that educational opportunity: both boys and girls had problems financing their studies, but girls also lacked the preparatory education which was more easily accessible to boys. Therefore female students had a more arduous journey to make before attaining the level in pre-education that their male counterparts were able to achieve with comparative ease.

Girls' access to basic and formal education

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Marion Talbot, who was a prolific contributor to the debate on women and education, presented a historical outline of education in America. The early settlers, she wrote, held it in high regard because they believed learning to be a necessary prerequisite for the liberty – the democracy – which they hoped to gain in their new homeland. She specifically regarded the founding of, for instance, Harvard College in 1636 as an act which led to the rise against English dominance.⁶⁷ At that time,

⁶⁵ Sue Zschoche, 'Dr Clarke Revisited: Science, True Womanhood, and Female Collegiate Education', *History of Education Quarterly* 29, 1989, 545–69.

⁶⁶ Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (NY: Basic Books, 1977), 142.

⁶⁷ Talbot, 1897, 248–49.

education for girls was not an issue.

When the American Revolution brought about – in the words of an encyclopedia – the ‘development of a native American culture characterized by self-reliance, optimism and individualism’, schooling became ‘a hallmark of social achievement and a means of realizing the American dream’.⁶⁸ As is usually the case during wars and upheavals, however, the educational system suffered from disruption when American rule replaced English domination. Furthermore, it did not become a federal obligation in the young nation to secure education on any level; it was up to each state to organize its own. Therefore access to education varied throughout the country. In view of that circumstance, as well as the notions outlined in the preceding section, the following remarks made by Frances B. Cogan are highly pertinent:⁶⁹

What, in fact, did the popular mind mean by ‘education’? The definitions are as various as the writers who offer them ... Education could – and did to some – mean simply experience with life and living; it could also mean academic training, which many understood to be no higher than the eighth grade. Another concept presupposed secondary work through high school, and still others believed women should pursue a course of ‘home study’ completely outside school. Others meant vocational training when they referred to education and for some spiritual or moral education through Christian instruction or training in citizenship and social responsibilities was the preferred course.

It is reasonable to believe that the term ‘education’ was a fuzzy concept which Americans defined individually according to their experiences and opinions well into the nineteenth century, and that this was especially the case where education concerned girls.

Education for democracy

The term ‘democracy’ frequently appears in both non-fictional and fictional texts focused on education. The way it is used there is in agreement with the *OED* definition: in the political sense as a ‘government by the people’, exercised directly or indirectly by delegates elected by them, and also in the social sense as ‘the common people’, whose power is not dependent on heredity or rank. Barbara Miller Solomon claims that the ‘Jeffersonian principle that each man should rise according to his abilities’ was widely embraced at the time and gradually applied by women to themselves.⁷⁰ The Jacksonian era (1829–1837) is often mentioned as a period when ‘democracy’ gained wide acceptance: Andrew Jackson introduced a change of system by turning his appeals

⁶⁸ *World Education Encyclopedia*, ed. by George Thomas Kurian, 3 vols (NY: Facts on File Publications, 1988), III, 1346. ‘Native’ in this passage is used as a designation for the descendants of European settlers, a choice of adjective which looks strange to a present-day reader.

⁶⁹ Cogan, 67.

⁷⁰ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (New Haven: Yale U, 1985), xviii.

directly to the masses and by replacing the administrative executives with his own people on his election. Furthermore, to use the words of the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Jackson was not, as his predecessors had been, an 'aristocrat', but a 'man of the people'.

Democracy presupposes participants who have learnt to read, understand, and analyse – for the simple reason that voters are to share the responsibility for serious decisions. At the time which is dealt with in this book, only men were invited to decide about the future. In the same way only male pupils and students were initially offered the opportunity to study outside their homes. Nevertheless, many Americans understood the importance of girls' schooling in view of their future task: the upbringing of sons. Mabel Newcomer quotes one Charles McIver, who is said to have stated in 1907: 'Educate a man and you have educated one person; educate a mother and you have educated the whole family.' It was probably this argument, she writes, that was the most persuasive for those in favour of women's higher education.⁷¹

Schooling at home

Up to the 1810s, it was the custom for mothers to provide training at home in what was regarded as the basic skills: religious instruction and reading. General supervision and guidance formed vital parts of that mission.⁷² The republican ideal – the fostering of virtuous (male) citizens – promoted mothers in general and stressed their importance in the upbringing of boys. Gordon mentions an additional factor; in her view, the religious movement, the Second Awakening from the late 1790s to the 1850s, especially reinforced the moral aspect of women's motherly educational duty by 'enhancing and enforcing their spiritual authority within the home'.⁷³ In her historical overview of women in the nineteenth and twentieth century, Barbara Miller Solomon concurs with that opinion. She adds that there was presumably one more reason for the particular religious duty that woman shouldered: pre-Revolution men, who were occupied with moneymaking or politics, had delegated that responsibility to those women at home who could at least read and interpret the Bible.⁷⁴ In 1904, the editor of *The Outlook* stated a third source of influence: ministers tended to include arguments for the 'attractiveness to men of religion in women' in their sermons.⁷⁵

Thus children's basic education generally started at home, or in so-called

⁷¹ Newcomer, 32.

⁷² *World Education*, ed. by Kurian, 1346.

⁷³ Gordon, 1990, 14.

⁷⁴ Solomon, 4.

⁷⁵ Lyman Abbott, 5035.

dame schools. Boys and girls were taught differently, according to their 'stations in life': reading was taught to all, whereas girls also learnt domestic skills. Their brothers knew how to write, an art which was useful in business.⁷⁶ In the period, a large proportion of the American population lived off the land. That explains why daughters were trained in the practical chores necessary for the survival of families, jobs which they would have to take on in their capacity as future managers of a household. (That process is illustrated in detail in Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and in Laura Ingalls Wilder's books.) In her article about the 'womanly woman', Welter writes that a 'true' woman's education was never 'finished' until she was instructed in the 'gentle science of home-making'.⁷⁷ It is somewhat confusing to see the use of 'finished' in this context: a 'finishing' education commonly evokes associations with less domestic activities.

Going to school

What kind of education, especially of a comparatively advanced kind, was deemed suitable for girls was a matter of opinion rather than one of general consensus. The reason why a number of people objected to formal schooling is articulated by Solomon: 'While the utility of educating women gradually gained acceptance, anxiety over their possible abandonment of traditional roles endured.'⁷⁸ Or, quite simply, as Newcomer puts it: 'Most of the opposition [to advanced schooling for women] was less concerned with whether education was good for women than whether educated women were acceptable to men.'⁷⁹

Solomon's survey told the story about 'those who hungered for education'.⁸⁰ Dispensing information about her *alma mater* in 1898, a Smith student illustrated what such longing might be like. Young Sophia Smith, who was to be the donor of the college, was denied the education provided for boys. She rebelled 'from the blindfold leading of the dame-school [by] sitting through the long hours of the summer morning, her head against the door of the boys' school, to listen to the words of knowledge, denied her, that fell from the master's lips.'⁸¹ Increasingly, though, sisters might benefit from their brothers' intellectual lessons to learn more than reading; initially this happened when classes of boys were not filled, or when male pupils had

⁷⁶ Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 3.

⁷⁷ Welter, 166.

⁷⁸ Solomon, xviii.

⁷⁹ Newcomer, 31.

⁸⁰ Solomon, xvii.

⁸¹ Alice Katherine Fallows, 'Undergraduate Life at Smith College', *Scribner's Magazine* 24, July–December 1898, 37–58 (58).

to help out at home during harvest times. Economically, this was good for the local community, since the master at school was already paid for.

'A number of schools appeared before 1800', writes Solomon, 'but the largest expansion by far came between 1830 and 1850.'⁸² However, female establishments providing various kinds of education existed well before that period.

Girls' schools

Over time, girls could gain access to single-sex institutions which scholarly texts alternatively refer to as boarding-schools, academies, and seminaries. From an academic point of view, their standards varied; usually deportment was practised more than the intellect was used. In 1870, for instance, when Vassar President Raymond elaborated on aspects of women's higher education, he deplored the predominance of feminine accomplishments in the education offered at such institutions.⁸³ Similarly, Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in America, warned against the superficiality of that 'fashionable education'.⁸⁴ Writing about the 'new woman', Patricia Marks refers to comparable training. She maintains that after the revolution, wealthy Americans educated their daughters in 'finishing schools on the English plan'.⁸⁵ Another writer claims that the Roosevelts and their 'ilk' simply dismissed the options at home and sent their daughters abroad to a finishing institution.⁸⁶

In her chronological overview, Eschbach refers to Catharine Beecher's crusade for higher studies: the knowledge supposedly acquired from them was primarily intended to improve woman's particular sphere in the home. Before the Civil War, Beecher founded two, though short-lived, secondary schools whose courses were rooted in domestic economics and pragmatic education specifically for the female sex.⁸⁷

Whether a girl gained access to education of a more academic kind depended not least on where she lived. Eschbach points to the good preparatory schooling which was offered in the north-eastern part of the USA,

⁸² Solomon, 15.

⁸³ Raymond in *Liberal Education*, ed. by Orton, 27–57 (31).

⁸⁴ Blackwell is quoted in Kett, 140.

⁸⁵ Marks, 91.

⁸⁶ Baker, 10. A fictional student comments on this kind of women's education – 'three or four years' travel in Europe with governesses, lessons with masters, [and] private lectures', not aiming at academic advancement. For certain groups in society, that student says, college is only considered to be good for future teachers, or for those who are culturally deprived at home. See Grace Margaret Gallaher, *Vassar Stories* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1899), 255–56.

⁸⁷ Eschbach, 39.

where the future female colleges were to cluster: the Young Ladies' Academy was founded in 1786 and the Troy Seminary in 1821.⁸⁸ They supplied girls with some higher, liberal-arts learning, which concentrated on the same staples as boys' pre-academic education, namely 'learning to write clearly and read critically'. Nevertheless, one of the founders admonished the graduating female students in well-known terms: they were not supposed to use their education in professional work or further studies, but in endeavours to 'please, charm, and entertain, at home, among their families and friends'.⁸⁹ From 1837 onwards, there were opportunities for female students to study at co-educational Oberlin and Antioch. All the same, the so-called 'ladies' course', constructed specifically for these students, required one year of study, to be compared with three years for men's college education, and it carried no degree, according to Vassar President James M. Taylor. When women were offered the full education, the 'ladies' course' nevertheless continued to attract a majority of women students.⁹⁰

Some characters in college stories are students from so-called 'normal schools'. Such vocational institutions were founded in the late 1830s, providing instruction for those who aimed at teaching. That occupation was deemed to be as untarnished as that of bearing and raising children while being held to provide good training for the motherhood a girl would later devote all her time and energy to. When the number of public schools increased in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a growing demand for more educated teachers. That was a need which women were more apt to meet than men. Female educators were cheaper, as men were usually paid two to four times more. Consequently, 'the limited opportunities open to women for paid employment [of some other kind] brought larger numbers of able women than able men into teaching.'⁹¹ Despite the fact that the institutions were co-educational, they were consequently highly feminized. Generally speaking, young females lacked the opportunity to acquire any higher education until the second half of the nineteenth century when they had gained access to secondary education.

State schools

Public schools opened in the first decades of the 1800s and were soon fol-

⁸⁷ Eschbach, 39.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12 and 33.

⁸⁹ Carol Ruth Berkin, *Women of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 73 and 75.

⁹⁰ James M. Taylor, 'College Education for Girls in America (II)', *Educational Review*, November 1912, 325-47 (328).

⁹¹ Newcomer, 14-15.

lowed by the high school which would in due course provide the general American secondary education. Courses in those institutions were guided by course plans: the establishments were both supported and controlled by the state.⁹² These schools were to facilitate a movement towards equality in education, geographically as well as socially and, not least, with regard to gender, as girls were gradually allowed to attend. That form of education involved little or no fee for tuition, and most girls could remain in the bosom of their family. In a period of about thirty years, writes Nancy Green, a large number of girls received a 'schooling beyond bare literacy, and a continuance in school beyond the age of about twelve'.⁹³

Joseph F. Kett claims that there were other reasons beyond those mentioned above why the co-educational secondary education offered in the public high schools became an increasingly popular option, for girls in particular. In the north-eastern parts, worried fathers who belonged to the rising urban middle classes realized that their household no longer provided work for the daughters. In addition, they were anxious that their female offspring should acquire mental agility so that their 'fluttering eyelids would no longer conceal a vacant mind'.⁹⁴ Real-life testimonies, however, stress that mothers were especially apt to back up girls who wanted to study. Josephine Dodge Daskam dedicated her 'impressions' of college, *Smith College Stories*, to her mother 'who sent [her] there'. Similarly, when Linda W. Rosenzweig looked into personal documents related to the period and to middle-class students she found that maternal support was 'the anchor' in the educational process, furthering any 'innovative aspirations and activities' among college-student daughters.⁹⁵ As a whole, articles printed at the time when college fiction was written and read confirm her perspective. If produced by men they usually contained hesitations and warnings about full-scale education for young women, while as a rule female voices argued in favour of it. Interestingly, the roles are generally inversed in women's college stories.

As boys tended to drop out of school because they preferred early and profitable employment, an option open to few of their female contemporaries, girls outnumbered them on graduation by 1890.⁹⁶ Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, high schools modelled their extra-curricular activities – debating and athletics, for instance – on those existing at college,⁹⁷ a circumstance likely to facilitate a transition for both female and male stu-

⁹² *World Education*, ed. by Kurian, 1346.

⁹³ Nancy Green, 'Female Education and School Competition: 1820–1850', in *Woman's Being, Woman's Place*, ed. by Mary Kelley, 127–41 (128).

⁹⁴ Kett, 138.

⁹⁵ "'The Anchor of My Life': Middle-Class American Mothers and College-Educated Daughters 1880–1920', *Journal of Social History* 25, 1991:1, 5–25 (1).

⁹⁶ Banner, 4.

⁹⁷ Kett, 183.

dents going on to higher education. So, as the nineteenth century progressed, girls were increasingly offered the same pre-college opportunities as boys, gaining entrance to different stages of formal education. Nevertheless, Marion Talbot pointed out that in Philadelphia, for instance, 'no girls could be prepared for college in the public schools before 1893', that is almost 30 years after Vassar College opened.⁹⁸

Girls thus gained access to formal education before the Civil War, which became a watershed for women and higher education. For obvious reasons the war caused a decline in university male-student enrolments. Access to preparatory education, the Civil War, the shortage of teachers, and the restricted possibilities for women to find gainful employment are, in combination, some of the factors which made it possible for more and more girls to take part in advanced studies. Having looked at basic and secondary schooling, it is time to move on to the education and campus life offered in a woman's college.

Academic education for women

As the first institution of higher education for women only, Vassar College was chartered before and opened right after the Civil War. In 1865, 353 young women between fifteen and twenty-four years old arrived at Poughkeepsie and were transported to the premises of the new institution some three kilometres away.⁹⁹ Residing in a single-sex environment, they were pioneers in the academic sphere. There were obstacles in their way, some of which would be overcome only to be replaced by others. The sum of negative attitudes to young women and academic work away from home had a tendency to be constant: their targets and arguments merely changed with the times.

In due course, more single-sex colleges for women opened. Most of them shared Vassar's initial difficulties: the dissimilar academic standards of the first eager students.¹⁰⁰ A preparatory department was established which contained a majority of the new students. The one at Vassar was not abandoned until after some twenty years, at a point when, as Marion Talbot claimed (above), Philadelphia girls could still not be properly educated for the level which was demanded by women's colleges.

The bold experiment

Vassar was the first all-female institution to maintain the same intellectual

⁹⁸ Marion Talbot, *The Education of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910; repr. NY: Dabor Social Science Publications, 1978), 16.

⁹⁹ The number of students varies in the material I have read. The figure is from Horowitz, 40.

¹⁰⁰ John Howard Raymond in his handwritten report to the trustees, 27 June 1866.

standards as those which were required in men's liberal-arts education. The earliest *Prospectus* emphasized that 'college' implied a certain direction of studies: the 'special function of a college is, to furnish the means of an advanced intellectual, or *liberal*, education.'¹⁰¹

When, in 1912, Vassar President James Monroe Taylor investigated girls' academic opportunities before his college came into existence, he found that the college or university courses which were offered before that year rarely met the demands formulated at the new establishments, one of the few exceptions being Oberlin, whose criteria in the co-educational courses actually met the demands. (That institution disregarded applicants' sex as well as their colour.) Still, after thirty years – that is when Vassar opened – only 79 of Oberlin's women students had received the A. B. degree, whereas after about the same length of time, Vassar alone had seen more than a thousand graduates through the final Commencement.¹⁰²

Vassar, and the other six new female institutions which made up the Seven Sisters, thus had the same objectives as the venerable men's colleges: liberal-arts studies were seen as the best means to expand and balance a student's 'mental powers', instil 'liberal and comprehensive views', and help a young person acquire an 'elevated character'.¹⁰³ The college type of cultural education was also held to promote democratic ideas. However, as was pointed out above, the women's colleges were organized quite differently from the men's to ensure the safety of the women students and the preservation of their femininity. One reason for finding non-vocational study appropriate for women was that it did not overtly encourage non-feminine professional aspirations. An obvious rationale underlying the design of academic content was that a rigorous programme gave the new establishments a chance to gain respect in the academic world as being intellectually trustworthy. To achieve that reputation, it was mandatory that examination results could be compared.

The first college years proved wearisome for staff and president. President Raymond's first report to the trustees emphasized the various successful efforts made by the staff pertaining to the girls' corporeal, moral, ethical, and religious development. Nevertheless, the average student's poor preparatory education remained a matter of concern for a long time in the female colleges. It was not only Vassar which wrestled with such difficulties. As late as 1908, when state-controlled schools issued certificates guaranteeing the academic level of students, Smith College claimed that not all of those

¹⁰¹ *Prospectus*, May 1865, 6.

¹⁰² Taylor, 1912, 329; Lida Rose McCabe, *The American Girl at College* (NY: Dodd, Mead, 1893), 5.

¹⁰³ These views are from the 'Yale Report', which will be discussed in section 'The liberal-arts programme' further down.

school reports were reliable.¹⁰⁴ However, despite various uncertainties, women's colleges gained acceptance and the idea of advanced studies for women caught on. Smith and Wellesley welcomed prospective graduates ten years after Vassar, and Bryn Mawr did so in 1883. Mount Holyoke followed suit, as did the 'annexes', Radcliffe and Barnard.

Doubts about women's capacities

In the main, students who had been properly educated before college managed well. Nevertheless, eight years after Vassar admitted its first students, Taylor introduced the 'Aims and Methods of Instruction' at some length, 'because the doubt had been expressed in influential quarters, whether in this "Woman's College" a collegiate standard could be maintained.'¹⁰⁵

One reason for the slow acceptance of female academic prowess may have been the doubts that even well-educated people entertained about women's capacities for arduous intellectual work. Newman maintains that it must have been a 'radical stance' to insist on the intellectual training of 'mental faculties' to promote 'creativity of thought', instead of offering academic education in domestic subjects, to which few people would have objected.¹⁰⁶ That seems a valid contention, especially in view of the stresses and strains of those introductory, experimental years. It is also commonly agreed among observers, writes Joyce Antler, that few people actually questioned the notion that women were as capable as men of acquiring an academic education. At the same time, a common opinion among present-day scholars is that women's colleges in fact complied with traditional views as well: the direction of the chosen curriculum was in keeping with prevalent attitudes. Antler points out that 'culture as an educational ideal upheld social norms' about women's nature, as well as their traditional roles, because culture was considered to be a passive attainment.¹⁰⁷ In the public eye, the value of the safe residential system at women's colleges may quite simply have constituted a more important factor than any disadvantage connected with the academic content, the promise of surveillance outweighing the uneasiness felt in some quarters over the new enterprise – women in higher education.

Women students were thus in a contradictory situation. Apart from those involved in her education, few people seem to have desired a young college woman to succeed intellectually. The claims in society at large on her feminine character involved ethics and aesthetics more than intellectual ability.

¹⁰⁴ Clyde Furst, 'Progress at the Women's Colleges', *Educational Review*, June 1908, 85–91 (86).

¹⁰⁵ James Monroe Taylor, 'Aims and Methods of Instruction', in *The Historical Sketch of Vassar College* (NY: S. W. Green, 1876), 38–78 (38).

¹⁰⁶ Newman, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Antler, 1987, 61 and 64–65.

Even so, her study results were expected to be comparable to a man's. If, despite all the obstacles and restrictions she faced, a girl student managed well in her studies, gratifying those in favour of her efforts, there were parties who considered her to have lost out in other areas. Trained and expected to please and obey, a college student would conscientiously do what was demanded of her. In arguments against scholarly studies for women, a paradoxical mind-set emerged according to which this studious woman was bound to be in error: while the male sex was expected to have a relaxed attitude to intellectual labours, in accordance with society's attitude to men, the female student would be successful in her studies because she did not know when to stop working. That opinion can be found in women's college stories.¹⁰⁸ For brilliance was not to be expected of women, because the idea was that women had inferior cerebral capacities. If a girl succeeded intellectually, she was consequently thought to be a 'grind', at risk of ruining her health and losing her femininity. If she failed, she was usually dismissed as a 'butterfly'. The fact that rules on when to study were set up for college girls confirms that picture. For a long time, girl students were instructed on how to use their free time, whereas boys were allowed to decide for themselves. In women's colleges, silence was compulsory during study hours, and lights had to be out at ten in the evening. Studying at night or early in the morning was forbidden. No similar restrictions existed for men students.

The aims of Matthew Vassar's college

Trustees, founders, and presidents of the six colleges which came after Vassar relied on the early experiences of the pioneering college. Furthermore, as one writer said in 1893, most 'educational institutions for women had by then at least one Vassar graduate on its faculty.'¹⁰⁹ Matthew Vassar, however, had few experiences to rely on, as his questions to Sarah Hale demonstrate. Apart from being related to feminine conduct and accomplishments, those questions concerned academic matters: 'Shall a certain number of years of study, or a certain amount of attainments, be required for a Diploma? How far prosecute the Ancient Classics?'¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, in his first address to the Trustees of Vassar in 1861, Matthew Vassar stated that his college was ostensibly aimed at providing girls with the same possibilities for advanced studies

¹⁰⁸ In fiction, individual college girls may warn friends against over-studying, or regretfully compare young women's serious educational attitude to boys' allegedly slack one. In *College Girls*, for instance, academic brilliance is at times defined as impairing a woman's attraction. However, the personal exhilaration and general admiration among peers gained by means of studious efforts are prominent features in women's college stories.

¹⁰⁹ McCabe, 6.

¹¹⁰ Rogers, 50.

as those available to young men:¹¹¹

It occurred to me that woman, having received from her creator the same intellectual constitution as man, has the same right as man to intellectual culture and development.

I considered that the mothers of a country mold the character of its citizens, determine its institutions, and shape its destiny.

Next to the influence of the mother, is that of the female teacher, who is employed to train young children at a period when impressions are most vivid and lasting.

It also seemed to me, that if woman were properly educated some new avenues to useful and honorable employment might be opened to her.

Vassar's last paragraph about 'some new avenues' implied a wider perspective for the graduate than that of home and school, although he phrased it in a cautious manner. Various allowances and considerations were specifically extended to the female students, according to the *Prospectus*. Nevertheless, it actually stated two goals which were professed to be valid for men as well as women students: '... a consequent preparedness alike for the great general duties of life and for the more ready and successful acquirement of *any particular profession* (emphasis added).'¹¹² In *Alma Mater*, Horowitz quotes Vassar addressing the trustees in 1864. On the question of appointing women to the staff, he said that 'it is vain to educate woman's powers of thought, and then limit their operation'.¹¹³ His statement acknowledges that graduates should be granted opportunities to use their knowledge, powers, and skills. At the time few people could – or wanted to – foresee the number of 'avenues' academic women would gradually enter. In the progressive era, unprecedented opportunities did open for graduates in the form of remunerative employment in social work and in academic areas pertaining to the domestic sphere. They may not have been foreseen by those who, before the Civil War, advocated women's higher education by suggesting the need for advanced studies in hygiene and domestic techniques which, so the argument went, would improve working and living conditions in homes.¹¹⁴ In the twentieth century those ideas came back with a vengeance, resulting, for instance, in chairs in domestic science and home economics.

The two primary educational goals for Matthew Vassar's college according to his credo quoted above – those of providing future well-educated mothers and teachers – were, however, quite in line with general opinion at the time. According to Newcomer, who quotes a letter of his written in 1860, Vassar was looking for students who gave the 'greatest evidence of capacity

¹¹¹ 'Mr Vassar's Statement', 1862 in *Documentary History of Vassar College*, 55.

¹¹² *Prospectus*, 6.

¹¹³ Horowitz, 38.

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Cogan, 83–88.

to receive moral and mental culture'; in this context he did not add 'intellectual'.¹¹⁵ Reviewing what she calls the ideal of Real Womanhood in the period preceding the female colleges, Cogan states one moral argument for offering advanced studies to female students: they would provide women with means to soften and refine American society, whose ethics were felt by concerned citizens to be flawed by increasingly aggressive competition. That view apparently formed part of Vassar's objectives too. 'Academic education', Cogan writes, 'with its firm emphasis on humanistic values, its accumulated insights from centuries, and its insistence on rationality rather than violence or passion as a guiding force', was believed to contribute to a reinforcement of the values which women were thought to be predestined to instil and safeguard.¹¹⁶

The liberal-arts programme

The liberal-arts concept is derived from the medieval Western university, according to the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In that period, the seven liberal arts were grammar, rhetoric, logic, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. In more recent times, the liberal arts have been considered to be literature, languages, philosophy, history, mathematics, and science, divided into three areas: the humanities, the physical and biological sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences.

At the time on which this book concentrates, texts would frequently refer to the assumption, mentioned earlier, that an intellectual culture inculcated by academic studies would expand and discipline the mind as well as provide the student with a balanced mentality. 'Culture' would then denote the liberal-arts concept, with its foundation in the 'dead languages' and mathematics. That view obviously dates back to the so-called 'Yale Report' of 1828. Its second part has been said to constitute '[o]ne of the most influential documents in the history of American Higher education'.¹¹⁷ Seeing Latin and Greek as endangered subjects, a Yale committee argued in favour of the male traditional and non-vocational higher education. The report stressed the special need for the classics and mathematics on which such education was founded. Their effort was successful: the liberal-arts concept remained unchanged in men's academic education for decades to come. In *The Undergraduate Woman*, Joyce Antler refers to the Yale Report in passing; she claims that the cultural studies of the day were seen as instilling a 'high

¹¹⁵ Newcomer, 130.

¹¹⁶ Cogan, 89–90.

¹¹⁷ *Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College by a Committee of the Corporation and the Academical Faculty* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1828), I: 7–8 (<http://www.collegiateway.org/>, 16 October 2002).

moral character'.¹¹⁸ Even though 'moral' is not a conspicuous word in the report, this emotionally charged characteristic reverberates in discussions pertaining to women and their position; consequently, the tenets of the report may well have formed the basis for suggestions made by the advocates of women's advanced learning: they certainly reverberate in ensuing debates about women and education. The direction of these discussions could explain why ethics was a prominent feature in the new institutions.

Although the liberal-arts concept as such had a long history, it apparently needed extensive clarifying when employed in women's colleges – in part perhaps because its content was by that time caught up in a whirl of change at the corresponding institutions for men. Speaking before the Baptist Educational Convention in Brooklyn in 1870, Vassar President Raymond defined 'liberal' in the following terms:¹¹⁹

...as opposed, on the one hand, to special or professional; and, on the other, to popular or elementary. *Special* education is training for one's business in life. It is the province of the schools of divinity, law, medicine, farming, engineering, etc. Antecedent to this comes *general* education, of which there are two grades, elementary and liberal. ... The other (liberal) is scientific in its instructions and comparatively severe, going to principles, accompanied with demonstrations, and training the learner in the methods by which results are obtained. It seeks a further and still higher end in the more complete and symmetrical development, discipline and refinement of the man himself, with reference to which it is often called the *highest culture* ... This is the kind of education for which colleges and universities have been established and are sustained, and by the operation of which an *educated class* (in the special sense) is created. Without such a class and the culture that produces it, not only literature, philosophy, and all intellectual professions must languish; but popular education truly could not be maintained, and the further advancement of science would soon become an impossibility.

It is worth noting that although Raymond was a champion of women academics, he still applied his message to the 'refinement of the man'. He was firm in his opinion that the liberal-arts education was as indispensable for the standard of basic education – by filling the need for well-informed teachers, presumably – as it was fundamental to subsequent professional training. Raymond's views on early schooling coincide with Matthew Vassar's concrete goals for his college students, who were expected to teach the young at home and elsewhere. Similarly, Raymond's speech indicates that he, too, envisaged new possibilities for girl graduates. A liberal education was regarded as the prerequisite for various kinds of professional tuition; the liberal-arts education was thus 'antecedent' to the 'special' kind.

¹¹⁸ Antler, in *Undergraduate Woman*, ed. by Perun, 19–20.

¹¹⁹ Raymond, in *Liberal Education*, ed. by Orton, 27–28.

Raymond rephrased the ideas of the Yale Report: America needed a cultural elite. Therefore he appreciated a young person's burgeoning ability to think independently. It was the task of an academically credited establishment (such as the women's colleges) to support her efforts at cognitive development by providing knowledge and promoting her learning skills. Commencing his talk with the vague goals of 'culture' and 'an educated class' referred to in the passage quoted, he continued by offering a detailed explanation of the step-by-step structure of each college year – ranging from freshmen's initial drills to advanced intellectual discussions in the senior year. He also touched on specific components as well as on the overall considerations that formed the basis of the curriculum, the content of each course, the choice of subjects and the level of examinations. Interestingly, the Reverend H. H. McFarland copied part of his explanation verbatim a year later in 'What are they doing at Vassar?' – an article published in August 1871 in *Scribner's Monthly*. The title indicates a need for clarification not only of the 'liberal-arts' education as such, but also of its implications for female colleges in general. Apparently, the ideas behind the content, scope, and direction of the general academic studies on which a girl student embarked were still obscure to the public at large, who, of course, needed to be convinced of the benefits of a college education for their daughters. However, the precise meaning of the liberal-arts concept has proved difficult to establish. When *The American College* was published almost a century later, the editor Nevitt Sanford argued that 'the professed objectives of higher education, particularly those of liberal education, [were] still ... vague and controversial' in the middle of the twentieth century.¹²⁰

In a letter written in 1875, Raymond articulated his credo concerning women's higher education. It demonstrates how he wrestled with a definition of the goals of Vassar's college education, some of which had been adumbrated in 1870. His thoughts still provide food for reflection: ¹²¹

The only thing that we ask of our pupils is that there should be thought, honest and earnest; and the aim of our training is, not to inculcate a particular creed or system of belief, but to furnish the youthful mind with the well-established and undisputed results of past inquiry, to inform it clearly in respect to the great questions in philosophy and science which now divide the thinking world, and so to develop and discipline its faculties that it shall be able in due time to form its own opinions and to understand and explain the grounds on which those opinions rest.

More than a hundred years later, the definition of 'liberal arts' in *NEB* is in essential agreement with that contention.

¹²⁰ Nevitt Sanford, 'Higher Education as a Field of Study', in Sanford, ed., *The American College* (NY: John Wiley, 1962), 30–73 (32).

¹²¹ Talbot, 1910/1978, 111. The quotation is from *Life and Letters of John Howard Raymond*, ed. by his eldest daughter (NY: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1881), 584.

President Raymond's expounding of the term 'liberal' over a period of more than five years shows how experience, reflection and, presumably, faculty discussions sharpened and clarified the original, abstract plans. The early 'Aims and Methods of Instruction' were very explicit, but merely in respect of such details as what texts to study and what outcomes to expect from each individual course for the group of students as a whole.¹²² Raymond repeatedly made sure that the four years adhered to a scheme of progression intended to foster individual thought. The freshman and sophomore years should be spent acquiring a breadth of knowledge, while the last two years moved towards depth in a few academic areas.¹²³ That idea reappears in *The American College*, Nevitt Sanford's 1962 volume mentioned above.

The years towards the end of the century brought greater freedom of choice; for instance, new chairs were created in history, economics, and psychology. Rogers maintains that these developments facilitated 'a broader outlook and a more critical approach', pointing to the ways in which students began to use primary sources in history and study the community in economics.¹²⁴ By 1906, the largest classes were in those two subjects, as well as in English, philosophy, and biology.¹²⁵

The role of Latin and mathematics

By 1873 Vassar educators had gained some experience. In words which echo the contentions of the Yale report, faculty member James Orton explained the reasons behind the inclusion of Latin and mathematics – but no longer Greek – as compulsory subjects during the freshman year at Vassar College:¹²⁶

[T]he college believes in holding its students to Latin and mathematics for at least one year, as the best possible preparation for the work before them. It is the experience of centuries that classical study is the most perfect training in the study of language; and no young lady can afford to lose that priceless culture. It is, moreover, a means of mental refinement and the inspiration of original thought.

Orton obviously felt the need to promote these subject areas. Furthermore, by including references to academe – 'the experience of centuries' – on the one hand and to the womanly sphere of 'culture' on the other, he may have wanted to satisfy opposing parties who worried lest Latin and mathematics were,

¹²³ However, Vassarite Agnes Rogers claimed that until 1890, students were largely trained to gather and describe facts, and then to arrange them in 'a precise and orderly way', a statement which seems to contradict the idea of educational progression; Rogers, 54.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 54; the 'original approach to academic study' was developed by Lucy M. Salmond and Professor Herbert E. Mills respectively.

¹²⁵ Worthington, 409.

¹²⁶ James Orton, 'Vassar College', in Orton, ed., *Liberal Education*, 282.

in fact, barely manageable for girls, though for dissimilar reasons. In her unpublished doctoral thesis, Linda Mathers refers to a 1906 debate on this issue in *Educational Review* between two professionals in education – the male principal of the Girls' High School in Brooklyn and Daisy Lee Worthington of Vassar. Though the debate took place in the twentieth century, the issue was obviously one which Orton too had faced. The principal used an argument which must have been hackneyed by that time: 'a girl can manage algebra, since that requires memory, but geometry gives her trouble because it requires her 'to reason absolutely, while her natural preference is for the concrete and individual.' Physics, he argued, presented a similar problem.¹²⁷ In the new century, those who favoured mathematics for female as well as male students tended to echo the Yale Report: the studies would train a student's mental balance and poise as well as the power of 'lucid' expression.¹²⁸

Requirements and curriculum at Vassar 1897–1898

As was pointed out above, the four years were not primarily intended to prepare students for a specific profession. Above all, college was to provide a profound all-round education; this aim is embodied in the requirements stated for Vassar College towards the end of the century. They were requirements which story-writer Jean Webster, who graduated in 1901, had to meet before and during her studies there, and the course of her protagonist's studies in *Daddy-Long-Legs* adheres closely to what is stated in documents from that period. The stipulations were as follows:

To be admitted at all, the student must be at least sixteen and provided with '[s]atisfactory testimonials of good character'.¹²⁹ Unless they were equipped with reliable certificates affirming their capacity in an approved way, candidates had to pass an examination in English, History, Mathematics, Latin, and French, German, or Greek. If their results were not satisfactory, they might still begin at college, but they were 'conditioned' and had to catch up in the areas where they failed. The ability to write good English, in relation to subject-matter, form, and logical structure, was of decisive importance. 'No candidate [would] be accepted in English whose work [was] notably

¹²⁷ Linda Mather, 'The Education of Women: Images from Popular Magazines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 42–43.

¹²⁸ See, for instance, Mary Leal Harkness, 'The College Course for Women', *The Independent*, 1912, 240–43 (241); and Lavinia Hart, 'A Girl's College Life', *The Cosmopolitan* 31.2, June 1901, 188–95 (193). Acknowledging the benefits of mathematical studies, Hart nevertheless advises a girl student against spending time on them, because no graduate can 'feed them to the baby'.

¹²⁹ 'Admission of Students', *Annual Catalogue of Vassar College 1897–98*, 15–23 (15–16).

deficient in point of spelling, punctuation, grammar or division into paragraphs.¹³⁰

Four years of study led up to a Baccalaureate Degree, the equivalent of a university Bachelor's degree. The students' elective and compulsory subjects had to comprise fifteen hours of classroom work every week (fourteen during the second half of their education). The curriculum contents and the course requirements included:

- Freshman: Latin (the ability to read ordinary prose Latin with ease and intelligence. Composition, translation and style); French (a thorough grammatical drill, the capacity to write and speak correctly and to read classics) or German or Greek; English (Composition); Mathematics (Geometry, Algebra, Trigonometry); Physiology; and Hygiene (house sanitation – with a view to securing the health of the 'weaker' sex).

- Sophomore: English (Argumentation, Outline of History and Development of English Literature); History (European); Chemistry or Physics.

Elective, together with those mentioned above: Astronomy; Geology; Biology; Economics and Sociology; Art; and Music.

- Junior: Psychology, one semester.

Elective, together with those mentioned above: Philosophy.

- Senior: Ethics, one semester.

Elective, together with those mentioned above: Sanskrit.¹³¹

Clearly, the freshman year contained few possibilities to choose what to study, whereas the last two years both allowed and forced the student to find her particular inclinations.

Remaining anxieties

However much the colleges expanded and however well students succeeded, apprehensions about women occupied with academic studies remained, as we have seen. Indeed, they seem if anything to have increased in the progressive period to which my book relates: Alice Freeman Palmer, President of Wellesley College 1882–1887, lamented that even after the 'twenty-five years of varied and costly experiment' of young women's academic education, that anxiety was deeply embedded in general opinion: 'the public mind [was] so uncertain, so liable to panic, and so doubtful, whether, after all, it [was] not better for the girl to be a goose ...'.¹³²

David Starr Jordan, who was the first president of Stanford University

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 'Courses and Methods of Instruction', 24–58.

¹³² Alice Freeman Palmer, 'A Review of the Higher Education of Women', *The Forum* 12, September 1891, 28–40 (28, 40).

and who had studied at a female seminary, assumed a liberal attitude to women's education, writes Newman in her introduction to his 1902 article about women and higher education. Nevertheless, he thought women students were different as a group from male students, echoing Herbert Spencer's contention mentioned earlier: women had 'greater readiness of memory' but lacked 'originality'; Jordan maintained that 'the "motor" side of their minds and natures' was not developed.¹³³ The relation between general views on girls' mental faculties and his ideas is obvious. It is more difficult to bring his opinions into line with President Raymond's claims regarding the girl student's 'thought', for which some 'originality' must still be considered mandatory.

In a book published in 1959, Newcomer enumerates negative and common opinions, most of which admittedly refer to co-education, into which women students poured in the progressive era. Girls would distract the men; the latter would not like to have women around; the founders had intended the institutions for men only; there was not money enough for both parties; the esteem in which an institution was held would be lowered, no matter how well female students succeeded; education would destroy women's religious beliefs.¹³⁴ Basically, such opinions are related to views about woman's particular place at home and in society as well as to views about men's superiority. A new, but certainly related anxiety arose: could the Anglo-American 'race' survive in a nation 'plagued' by an increasing number of female academic graduates? This controversial question is dealt with further down in the section called 'Race suicide': the term was frequently used in late-progressive articles debating this problem, which was of course connected to the old issue of woman's place.

A related phenomenon were the renewed suggestions in favour of a curriculum which prepared women for one specific occupation, namely that of managing a home and family. As was seen in the requirements for Vassar College, towards the end of the nineteenth century girls as well as young men could choose among elective subjects to satisfy their diverse inclinations. In 1895, an assistant professor in sociology envisaged how this arrangement would lead to demands for a domestic education for women, of a 'liberal scientific' kind, 'with special reference to their domestic occupations and functions'. As she ironically put it: '[Female students] must not be too highly educated, lest freedom turn [them] from [their] proper sphere'.¹³⁵ Her prediction proved correct.

¹³³ David Starr Jordan, 'The Higher Education of Women', *Popular Science*, December 1902, in *Men's Ideas*, ed. by Newman, 96–104 (96 and 98).

¹³⁴ Newcomer, 31.

¹³⁵ Mary Roberts Smith, 'Recent Tendencies in the Education of Women', *Popular Science Monthly* 48, November 1895, 27–33 (31–32).

There were counter-arguments, though they were in the minority, to the resurrected proposals that girls be educated for the home. One such (anonymous) voice pleaded in 1911 that education should be adapted to human beings, and not devised for two sex-related groups.¹³⁶ Another writer, speaking of any female student's prospects, hoped that the 'wisdom of the college president [would] rescue her from domestic science ... [in which case she would have] a chance, in four years of study, to lay the foundation of knowledge.'¹³⁷

Even professionals and women graduates, however – some of whom were college-story writers – argued that the liberal-arts education should move towards a domestic education on an academic level.¹³⁸ They had by then experienced the after-college opportunities for female collegians. Matthew Vassar's 'new avenues' had not materialized to any great extent; professional limitations and significant societal pressures had marred women graduates' ambitions. One Dr Lyman Abbott prophesied in 1904 that the 'education of the future will recognize motherhood as the supremest of all destinies, and the curriculum of all women's schools and colleges worthy of the name will be fashioned to conform to this standard and to prepare for this service.'¹³⁹ In 1912, a speaker at the annual meeting of the National Educational Association similarly expressed the conventional opinion that a young woman should be educated for the 'demands of her womanhood for home and family life'. A woman, that president claimed, as Clarke *et al.* had once done, was neither physically nor mentally strong enough to combine the demands of a profession with those pertaining to the responsibility for a home.¹⁴⁰

Problems at college seemed to support that notion; when the number of students increased, staff members complained that the percentage of ambitious ones decreased. Scholars emphasize how 'students of the wealthy strata' were accused of preferring to have a 'good time' at college to committing themselves to intellectual endeavours or to planning for careers.¹⁴¹ The proposals made in contemporary texts were connected with the two contradictory issues: the difficulty facing an academic who could not make profession-

¹³⁶ 'Be Clever, Sweet Maid' by The Bachelor Maid, *The Independent*, 1911, 952–55.

¹³⁷ Agnes Reppelier, 'The Girl Graduate', *The Century Magazine* 80, June 1910, 227–39 (230). See, too, M. Carey Thomas, 'Should the Higher Education of Women Differ from that of Men?', *Educational Review* 21, January 1901, 1–10.

¹³⁸ See, for instance, Helen Dawes Brown, 'How Shall We Educate Our Girls?', *The Outlook*, March 1896, 431–32; Frances E. Willard, 'Shortcomings in the Education of Women', *The Critic*, 21 August 1897, 97–98; Hart, 1901; Jessie A. Chase, 'Wanted – A New Woman's College', *Harper's Bazar* 39:1, 1904–05, 348–49.

¹³⁹ Lyman Abbott, 5038.

¹⁴⁰ Lorenzo D. Harvey, president of Stout Institute, Mnemonie, Wis., 'The Education of Girls', *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses* (The National Educational Association, 1912), 425–30 (426 and 430).

¹⁴¹ See, for instance, Horowitz, 147.

al use of her trained capacity for 'thought', and the negligence showed by a student who neither relished the intellectual challenge nor harboured any professional ambitions. Studies in subjects related to the one area open to them were perceived as more beneficial than in those offered at college. Opponents who disapproved of the domestic trend in education nevertheless often agreed with the basic notion implied above; they praised the liberal-arts programme because it was worthwhile for a graduate who would later be working as a housewife.¹⁴² In *The Ladies' Home Journal*, for instance, the presidents of Smith College and Mount Holyoke emphasized that advantage; a liberal-arts education equipped the future homemaker well for her important task.¹⁴³ The president of Harvard, Charles W. Eliot, simply evaded the issue in 1908 by arguing that higher education was really unnecessary: woman's intellectual life was promoted more effectively than it was at a college when she brought up 'several' children of her own.¹⁴⁴

From the start, physiology and hygiene were compulsory in a liberal-arts education for girls; home economics plus domestic science were gradually introduced as elective subjects in some institutions, particularly at co-educational universities. But in college fiction, women characters study the traditional liberal-arts subjects. Some volumes in the girls' series refer to the new domains;¹⁴⁵ and the rise of a domestic, scientific education is alluded to in Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921).

Between two stools

In *The Education of Women* (1910), Marion Talbot stated her strong views on women's higher education. Fifteen years after debaters had voiced their fears that an elective system would lead to different kinds of education for men and women, that influential educationist voiced her belief in precisely such a system. The whole of women's academic education should focus on scientific and practical aspects of the home life to which, Talbot declared, most of the women graduates would devote their lives. Though she disagreed with Mary Roberts Smith about contents, she in fact agreed with Smith in opposing the system of electives; it would endanger her domestic concept. Either faculty or advisers should therefore determine the entire college course for the student.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² See, for instance, "A Typical Impractical College Girl" and "Another 'Impractical College Girl'" plus the editorial comment, in *Vassar Quarterly*, 1916, 1, 194–96, and 2, 49–50.

¹⁴³ Clark L. Seelye, 'What the College Woman Can Do', *LHJ*, January 1910, 20; Mary E. Woolley, 'The College Woman as a Home-Maker: Does the College Fail to Fit a Girl for the Home?', *LHJ*, October 1910, 16. See also Palmer, former president of Wellesley, in *The Forum*, 28–40.

¹⁴⁴ Charles W. Eliot, 'The Normal American Woman', *LHJ*, January 1908, 15.

¹⁴⁵ See, for instance, Nell Speed, *Molly Brown's Sophomore Days* (NY: Hurst, 1912), 197–208.

¹⁴⁶ Talbot (1910/1978), viii and 173.

Talbot seems to have walked a tightrope, balancing ardent support of women's claims for intellectual advancement against an anxiety to safeguard womanly virtues in the student – although she invited the student to extend her family duties into society. Talbot belonged to the first generation of students: she graduated in 1880 from Boston University, taught domestic science, and became Professor of Household Administration. Attracted to John Dewey's arguments for vocational training, she insisted that the liberal-arts kind of education she had been exposed to constituted a deficient preparation for any woman student's future. She criticized it because '[o]nly that body of knowledge has been supposed to be available for the higher intellectual training, which has no immediate relation to the life interests of the student'. With regard to women graduates' limited choice, her use of 'interests' is peculiar. 'Duties', or 'needs', would surely have been more appropriate terms. 'Interests' in this context indicates that a virtue is made of necessity:¹⁴⁷ a girl's education ought to be related to the practical aspects of her future life, which would not change. The most effective way to prepare a student for what lay ahead would consequently consist in teaching her to broaden her innate, gendered, and therefore specific, talents, making them truly serviceable.

In the progressive society, Talbot wrote, industry had taken care of much hard work at home; women could therefore extend their duties by assuming 'civic, philanthropic and social activities'.¹⁴⁸ Although critical of the liberal-arts curriculum, she considered the domestic environment at college to be of the utmost importance for the woman student's character. The college years would help to 'establish standards of conduct, of principle, of social efficiency, of appreciation, of discrimination, and of moral power', provided that college halls and rooms were as much like those of a family as possible. To Talbot, 'education at home' implied that every member took on individual responsibility for the welfare of others as well as for the place they shared. In this task the students would primarily educate themselves. She also, and firmly, contended that girls who failed in this respect should be sent home without delay.¹⁴⁹

As will be seen below, the content of men's college education was also debated at the time. Those advocating it maintained that the major gains of

¹⁴⁷ In *Knowledge and Survival in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (Lund Studies in English, 2002), 34, Jane Mattisson discusses Bourdieu's 'double negation', a tantalizing idea with regard to girls' presumed 'interests'.

¹⁴⁸ Marion Talbot, 'The College, the Girl and the Parent', *The North American Review* 192, September 1910, 349–358 (351).

¹⁴⁹ Talbot (1910/1978), 184, 223 and 225. The core of advice provided by two contemporary writers agrees with Talbot's views, though neither argued for a radical change of study content: Helen Dawes Brown, *Talks to Freshman Girls* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914) and Jeannette Marks, *A Girl's Student Days and After* (NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1911) of Vassar and Wellesley respectively.

the non-professional higher education were to be found in the particular atmosphere of college in which students developed strength and ease by means of cultural education, extracurricular activities, and social intercourse – experiences which would be valuable in future business careers as well as in specialized vocational studies.¹⁵⁰ The idea that the college atmosphere was important in fact resembles Talbot's views; it is a predominant trait in women's college stories as well.

Educational problems

After some decades, educators faced a variety of problems with their students. In 1910, the Smith collegian Elizabeth Kemper Adams looked for other means of solving the difficulties than blaming students or the contents of the studies, preferring to question the methods of teaching used at the time. In her experience, discussions about how to produce 'stimulations to effective mental responses' were non-existent. Wishing to safeguard the liberal-arts concept, she suggested a revision of structure and the system in class; the curriculum was in her view too scattered and broad, the teaching methods too stereotyped and conventional. She claimed that contemporary academic work concentrated on 'acquisition, retention, and reproduction', a process that would inevitably result in students' feeling 'intolerable boredom'.¹⁵¹

Two years later, *The Atlantic Monthly* – a magazine for the arts, literature, and science – contained an article in which the writer, David Snedden, was adamant about the importance of liberal-arts education for men, though as critical as Adams about the way in which it was carried out. Especially in the USA with its democratic bias, he wrote, that specific programme had the means to produce citizens distinguished by 'high-grade appreciation and effective powers of utilization in the fields of citizenship, art, social intercourse, [and] religion'. Because the liberal-arts concept competed with the more effective and increasingly popular vocational education for men, he too called for a revision, finding it necessary to meet that threat. His thoughts echo the anxiety felt at women's colleges regarding students' waning interest in academic studies. Interestingly, though, he put the blame on members of the faculty, not only on methods and structure; in his opinion, 'professors and teachers' reflected historical views, lacking a 'fairly clear conception of goals to be reached'. At the time, Snedden maintained, the general, higher education did not kindle ideals nor 'sympathetic insight and personal culture' among the students, who, in the main, evinced a negligent and reluc-

¹⁵⁰ Kett, 181.

¹⁵¹ Elizabeth Kemper Adams, 'The Psychological Gains and Losses of the College Woman', *Educational Review*, March 1910, 238–56 (246–48).

tant attitude to scholarly endeavours. He saw two reasons behind that failure, both of which spared the students: first, the philosophy of the 'school-men' was a mixture of 'educational dogmas, psychological misconceptions, and cultural mysticisms'; second, the methods they used in education took the form of 'pitiful drills'. Obviously, he discerned no signs of the progressive study structure, aimed at encouraging invigorated student thinking, which Vassar President Raymond had claimed to be the essential aim at his college.¹⁵²

Both Adams and Snedden demonstrated the difficulties that non-vocational education faced; they also stated intellectual and methodological reasons for students' failure to appreciate the benefits of ambitious work. Their ideas are in line with later discussions in *The American College*. It is notable that the article which refers to women students contains the same ideas about how to attack the difficulties as those expressed by Snedden: Adams did not favour the familiar notion of women's specific need for domestic subjects.

Democracy at girls' colleges

The potent idea of America as a particularly democratic society was crucial in arguments for girls' formal education. During the heyday of the college story, the idea keeps recurring in factual texts on women and higher education. From 1900 onwards, it is generally mentioned in connection with student government and settlement work (on the latter, see the section called 'Professional work' below). In 1904, *Harper's Bazar* contained an article by Alice K. Fallows in which she discussed 'Self-Government for College Girls' – that is, what she regarded as true student participation in decisions relevant to college life. In this magazine for women, which usually upheld 'womanly-woman' qualities, Fallows maintained that 'responsibility is the best cure for irresponsibility'; she suggested that more character training was needed among college girls and would be supported by experiments in college democracy, in the course of which girls would be obliged to become 'their own law-makers, judges, and policemen'. Her choice of occupations is strangely opposed to the range of professions that were considered acceptable for women to enter.

As early as 1891, Bryn Mawr students were granted power both to make and to implement rules.¹⁵³ Nine years later, a writer in *Educational Review* considered that system to be 'the most completely organized and fully developed in the country'. Vassar was held up as an unfavourable contrast to Bryn Mawr: its student union was 'an executive body merely', enforcing re-

¹⁵² David Snedden, 'What of Liberal Education?', *The Atlantic Monthly* 109, January–June 1912, 111–17.

¹⁵³ See Fallows, 1904, 699–702.

gulations 'closely limited in scope'.¹⁵⁴ The first step to undergraduate involvement at Vassar was taken when the students put forward a proposal on what to do with a collected sum of money. The faculty, however, overruled their suggestion.¹⁵⁵ In 1915, *The Vassar Miscellany* printed a survey of the democratic movement within the college's domains. The writer confirmed the opinion in *Educational Review* above; over the years, the Vassar organization had suffered from being in an anomalous position, having had to administer laws which were in fact made by the faculty.

The Vassar writer suggested an early lack of stringency in the handling of the concept: 'many fleeting ideals ... have borne the label "democratic"'. (The sheer amount of discussion devoted to attempts at defining the word seems to reflect a preoccupation with the idea during the period.) The *Miscellany* writer continued: if the Student's Association should merit the epithet 'democratic', it 'must express the interests and ideals common to its members'. By 1915, according to *The Vassar Miscellany*, increasing responsibility conferred on the student body had proved a successful experiment in real democracy. Gradually, almost inevitably, student participation expanded its boundaries, a development which is also referred to in fictional tales.

Were real colleges democratic in the sense that students came from different classes of society? According to an article in *The Critic* at the time, female students had fathers who were usually either professional men or merchants of moderate means.¹⁵⁶ Barbara Miller Solomon did not contradict this rather vague description when, in 1985, she investigated what kinds of families valued higher education for girls in the second generation. She concluded that they belonged to the 'broad and expanding middle class'. The *pater familias* was active in the professions, in business, or in agriculture; besides, he and his family were economically and socially mobile. According to Solomon, education for a girl could be 'a means toward the improvement of self and society ... ; a logical step in [an] intellectual and social advancement; ... a way out of the constrictions, isolation, and poverty of rural life'.¹⁵⁷ Ex-President Palmer of Wellesley argued that college girls in general represented all kinds of origins, economically, socially, religiously and geographically.¹⁵⁸ Some college fiction starts off by making similar claims.

¹⁵⁴ Louise Sheffield Brownell Saunders, 'Government of Women Students in Colleges and Universities', *Educational Review*, December 1900, 475–98 (478, 489).

¹⁵⁵ Mary Elizabeth Roth, 'The Students' Association of Vassar College: An Experiment in Democracy', *The Vassar Miscellany* 10, 1915, 40–64, (40, 56 and 64).

¹⁵⁶ Frances Albert Doughty, 'The College Woman in Literature', *The Critic* 24, 5 October 1895, 209–10 (210).

¹⁵⁷ Solomon, 64 and 66–68.

¹⁵⁸ Palmer, 35.

What should a college education achieve? A 1962 investigation

There is consequently an abundance of contemporaneous sources in which anxieties regarding women students and their college education are expressed at some length. At the same time, some of these texts contain support for the general idea that higher education promotes character-building, as well as cultural insight and mental acumen. In these sources, women students are usually referred to as a group. It has proved harder to find expressions of concern with the individual student and with the gains that a liberal-arts education might entail for her. Such aims are usefully conceptualized in a much later work which has already been referred to above: *The American College*, published in 1962. In that publication, a range of scholars analyse the ideal development of an undergraduate during her journey in education, focusing on the highly susceptible period from the late teens to the early twenties. As late as 1997, this oeuvre was said to be a 'classic of critical research in higher education'.¹⁵⁹ The investigation was sparked by a visit to a large inland city: the editor, Nevitt Sanford, discovered that, in the main, the college-educated women whom he met and whom he had interviewed during previous research at Vassar led shallow lives made up of drinks, parties, and gossip. They looked for no aesthetic and intellectual satisfactions; they harboured no social responsibility, nor any awareness of their present superficial way of living.¹⁶⁰ Their college education, it appeared, was of no consequence; it had not brought any remarkable gains to the individual, nor was it beneficial to the society in which the women lived. In the progressive era, the mode of life Sanford described would have been similarly deplored. Some of the desired individual gains, such as the struggle to achieve independence, might have been considered a less attractive outcome in the progressive era. Nevertheless, the issues defined in *The American College* agree well with a contemporaneous claim: a liberal-arts education might be defined as a 'delightful experiment of finding oneself'.¹⁶¹ That is in fact what women's college fiction suggests, too.

I found the concepts and ideas in *The American College* extremely helpful when studying college fiction. The notions contained in it seem timeless and relate to the classic overriding questions: why should an individual spend precious time and energy in higher education, and why should society support a venture of that kind? Sanford *et al.* pay attention to views found in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources. Nowhere have I found these

¹⁵⁹ M. Brewster Smith, 'Nevitt Sanford 1909–1995', *American Psychologist*, February 1997, 174–75 (174).

¹⁶⁰ In the first chapter of Sanford, ed., *The American College*, 'Higher Education as a Social Problem', the subtitle is an enlightening question, with relevance to my analysis of the early college fiction as well: 'Do our colleges educate?', 10.

¹⁶¹ Mary Isabel Coates, 'Getting Vassared', *The Delineator*, 1912, 136.

views more thoroughly investigated than in *The American College*, and for that reason Sanford's volume has served as a point of reference throughout my analyses.

According to *The American College*, higher education, in the integrated sense of the concept, should cater for the 'individual needs [both] to know ...[and to] be able to do'. Furthermore, it should develop reflective qualities. The methods likely to yield such results must first foster familiar ways of working by training the student's capacities to memorize, discriminate, and organize. That strenuous work, in which personality and intellect interact, must retain, even spur, her energetic joy and excitement. Once those capacities are mastered, a further development should ensue. Sanford enumerated the characteristics that he would want to discover in a graduate who has truly benefited from a liberal-arts education. During her education, she ought gradually to acquire respect for learning and understand the conditions necessary for it. Furthermore, she should develop her individual reasoning power as well as be willing to work towards an intellectual/aesthetic goal for her own satisfaction and of her own free will, not that of teachers, parents, or friends. College, for Sanford *et al.*, was not only expected to promote the student's independence, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Her education should establish the particular values and tastes which would make her committed to causes whose merits she could assess. Finally, college should instil the intelligence needed for her to discriminate and analyse, and the skill to view what she had discovered from a perspective. One universal link to decisive educational experiences of this kind is a personal relationship between teacher/lecturer and student.¹⁶² If the student meets with adequate response – in Sanford's words, 'hard-hitting' teacher comments – to her work, this will strengthen her self-confidence.

Usually academic education is based on written assignments testing specific knowledge and the ability to think. Sanford drew a more nuanced picture of higher education, which should, in his view, adopt more far-reaching goals:¹⁶³

Education that aims at the inculcation of skills and knowledge respecting the material, social, and cultural worlds may be distinguished from education that has as its aim the fullest possible development of the individual. The former begins by asking 'what do people need to know?' if they are to live in our world and to ensure its perpetuation; ... The latter ... asks what qualities as a person he should have.

Sanford's definition of the aim and scope of higher education coincides with

¹⁶² Nevitt Sanford in *The American College: 'Higher Education as a Social Problem'*, 10–30 (10–12), and 'Higher Education as a Field of Study', 31–73 (35).

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 34–35.

Abraham Maslow's ideas about every human being's quest for self-fulfilment. The fundamental objective of that pursuit is a clear apprehension of one's own character and the ability to respect and come to terms with oneself: 'All people in our society ... have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect or self esteem, and for the esteem of others'. To comply with such an inherent demand, a college student would both search for recognition among peers/faculty and try to achieve mastery and competence in some field/s located by her in the course of her studies.¹⁶⁴ As will be seen below, these endeavours are frequently described in women's college fiction.

Maslow wrote: 'Acquiring knowledge and systematizing the universe have been considered as, in part, techniques for the achievement of basic safety in the world, or for the intelligent person, expressions of self-actualization.' Sanford illustrated the process as follows:¹⁶⁵

[T]he acquisition of a skill or the mastery of a body of information might raise the level of the individual's self-confidence, and thus enable [her] to venture into new situations and to have experiences that would develop [her] personality. Or a young person might encounter for the first time ... problems that tested [her] powers to the limit, and the finding of solutions might lead to involvement in an intellectual approach ... with all that this implies for values, style of life, and association, [this commitment] may give to a young person much needed stability in [her] self-conception.

In education, where students may pass or fail and where the contents should satisfy the needs of more than one individual, there is an ever-present dilemma, and Sanford highlighted this as well: does the driving force for each individual lie within each student, or does it consist in appreciation from staff, family, or peer-group members? That question is a pertinent one in college fiction.

Whatever the educational attainment might consist in, Maslow claimed that 'insight is usually a bright, happy, emotional spot in any person's life', placing this experience, which emanates from personal curiosity, in opposition to 'achieved results (and) learning'. He postulated that the basic requirements for a cognitive mind to expand are of two, albeit integrated, kinds: the desire to know and the desire to understand.¹⁶⁶ Defined by *OED*, to 'know' is defined as the more basic term: having studied, practised, or been instructed, a person is acquainted with a specific amount of facts. To 'understand' is used in a wider sense than to 'know': knowledge is fully gained and interpreted by the individual. College stories contain insights into student characters who are at college because they primarily want to 'know'. Many of them

¹⁶⁴ Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 3rd edn (NY: Harper Collins, 1987), 21.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 38.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 23 and 25.

are inexperienced and react with initial confusion when 'understanding' and independent thinking are demanded of them.

Investigating the college experience at Vassar around the middle of the twentieth century, Sanford and his colleagues looked for such effects of a higher education among students as were deemed to be gratifying and worth pursuing by society and individuals alike. However, according to Sanford and his colleagues, one question with several ramifications was not settled when they published *The American College*. Was the successful development of students discussed in Sanford's 'psychological and social interpretation of the higher learning' due to age or to selection? Was it due to the student's transitional time of life at college, or alternatively to the kinds of people who actually enjoyed the environment and the education offered there? Even though such uncertainties may also apply to an exploration of progression and influence in fictional texts, there is of course a major difference: the stories were produced and the content was chosen by a writer. The storyline might be connected to the writer's own experience of college, but what she chose to include, develop, exclude, or change was her own decision. Even so, it seems obvious to me that these narratives formed part of the lively public debate in which views for and against higher education for girls were exchanged and attempts were made to explain and interpret the mystery that was the college life of girls.

The four years at college start when the college gates open to admit the freshmen and close with 'Commencement', an apt word to indicate the beginning of the graduate's adult life. Seen in that perspective, the college years form part of an initiation for young people of both sexes. As has been mentioned, the general approach to intellectual training in colleges for women was to look towards men's higher education rather than to question the latter's direction, intention, and consequences. At the same time, a college education ought not to alter a woman's station in life. Looking back on the beginning of women's higher education, a paradox becomes apparent: whereas men in a liberal-arts education prepared for careers, professional studies, or post-college scientific work which were all accessible to them, women had few of those options. As Newcomer says: '[A college education] brought little or no social prestige.'¹⁶⁷ Nor did it include any vocational training.

By 1907, nevertheless, young women constituted one third of the total number of students in institutions open to both sexes.¹⁶⁸ This makes it pertinent to ask what advantages were expected to ensue for the girls. They took part in a strenuous and intellectually advanced form of learning; it is a fact

¹⁶⁷ Newcomer, 57.

¹⁶⁸ Talbot (1910/1978), 25.

that many of them then joined the workforce at least partly on the strength of their academic qualifications, as the Vassarite characters do in *Dear Enemy*. Therefore, even though college studies for women were not devised as introductions to specific professions, they must in fact have provided a solid competence for diverse future occupations.

Senior Commencement – and then what?

While debaters called for more education on domestic subjects, women students flocked into new and rapidly expanding departments which were directed toward the wider issues of economics and social problems. Joyce Antler emphasizes how guest lecturers created an interest among the undergraduates in 'new, pathbreaking occupations.' The focus on 'culture' in women's higher education was gradually shifted towards 'service and action'.¹⁶⁹ At Vassar, for instance, a professor of economics lectured on socialism in 1888 and Woodrow Wilson – then a professor – on democracy in 1893, whereas the economics department focused on the labour problem that same year. In 1898, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics* became the 'bible of the Vassar student body'. In Antler's words, it 'argued that only through gainful employment could women win independence.'¹⁷⁰ Graduates lectured on the position of women in 1899 and Jane Addams on 'The College Woman and the Social Claim' in 1902. The following year, large and attentive audiences were repeatedly advised 'not to teach until they [had looked] into the opportunities in law, medicine, journalism, business, and college settlements.'¹⁷¹ In 1916, Vassarite Helen J. Ferris claimed that teaching was no longer seen as a natural choice. By that time, according to Ferris, college women asked themselves first what they wished to do and then if there was an opening for them in that direction.¹⁷² In various ways, therefore, college studies gave women opportunities to work afterwards – if only until they married, which was the case for the majority of graduates.

These young women's education was demanding. When they had proved their worth and graduated, they faced challenges, wrestling with intricate anxieties which are often discussed in college fiction, for instance among seniors towards the end of their education. Barbara Miller Solomon sums them up: such women had to cope with 'both private questions of identity and the

¹⁶⁹ Antler, in Perun, 23.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷¹ Ellis, ed., 28–40; she found the information in *The Vassar Miscellany*.

¹⁷² Helen J. Ferris, 'A Business Career for the College Woman', *Vassar Quarterly*, 1916:1, 178–82 (178).

competing influences of family and college'.¹⁷³ Newspapers, magazines, and books of the period confirm her opinion. Not only do several of them contain critical comments regarding the assumed effect of higher education on women; the future lives envisaged for graduates are generally those that are outlined in fictional texts: settlement work, teaching, marriage, family activities. An academic woman who worked for money was commonly accepted only if she needed to support her family or herself.

As the number of graduates grew, so did public concern about their occupations. Helen Starrett was one of the first to publish pamphlets on these issues. In 1885 she pleaded the right to a professional life for the well-educated woman. Furthermore, at this early date she pointed to the striking discrepancy between the different kinds of remuneration that were offered to men and women doing the same work. The graduate's homecoming was in focus in a work which Starrett published in 1896. Called *After College, What?: For Girls*, it opened with frame stories illustrating the difficulties which awaited a graduate who returned home. Although the daughter had spent four years in an invigorating environment, her friends and family would neither understand nor accept that the person who came back was not the same as the one who had left. Starrett sketched two scenes: a mother deploring her educated daughter's expected lack of domestic knowledge and a father sadly realizing that his daughters take no interest in household chores nor in small-town men. Neither character has anything to say about the actual education, let alone its benefits. Starrett insisted that education bred a desire for opportunities to use the trained powers and be rewarded in a tangible way, to the point where she even maintained that educated women would want to exercise power.¹⁷⁴

Many graduates went home to the bosom of their families, to domestic chores or seeming nothingness. A writer maintained in 1898 that Vassar students were 'slowly awakened' to that 'supposed antagonism' which awaited them after Commencement.¹⁷⁵ By 1901, however, some Vassarites managed to laugh at the problematic prospects; Lynn D. Gordon quotes a student who told her parents how a play at Vassar – 'Victoria Vassar, Or After College, What?' – satirized the lack of exciting opportunities open to college women.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Solomon, 117.

¹⁷⁴ Helen Ekin Starrett, *After College, What?: For Girls* (NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1896), 5–27 (11). The title, *After College, What?*, was coined by William Lawrence in 1893. Joyce Antler is one of many writers who have used it for articles and books. In the 1880s, Starrett had published *The Future of Educated Daughters* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, 1885).

¹⁷⁵ Margaret Sherwood, 'Undergraduate Life at Vassar', *Scribner's Monthly* 23, June 1898, 634–60 (634).

¹⁷⁶ Gordon, 1990, 155. The young woman on stage fails to manage on her own and accepts an offer of marriage.

The 'family claim'

Several texts which dealt with the issue of women's higher education revealed their writers as egalitarians in the sense that no distinction due to sex or class could be tolerated in higher education in America. The debaters even seemed biased in favour of professional careers for women: in 1898 a *Forum* writer stated that American society benefited from, for instance, excellent women lawyers, physicists, professors, architects, and merchants. On the one hand, the type and number of professions mentioned suggest how much ground had been gained by academic women. Furthermore, the enumeration seems, on the face of it, to refute Dr Raymond's early opinion that while women could not match men's work in learning or in science, they were admirable as 'associates and aids'. On the other hand, texts like the one mentioned above would then typically go on to imply, in terms which were actually quite similar to Raymond's underlying view, that men were pathfinders, discovering and inventing, whereas women were good at learning and applying existing ideas and functions. Consequently, there had to be a distinction between men's and women's occupations. In 1895 Charles F. Thwing, a prolific writer on the subject of American higher education, summed up the shifting attitudes found in works dealing with the educated woman at the time along similar lines. In his view, college education was beneficial to women: they gained self-assurance from the intellectual efforts, but it also stood to reason that they would harbour no other ambition than happily to return home, quietly resuming the pursuits they had left four years earlier. Thwing's conclusion was benevolent but firm: woman's place, independently of her education, was the home.¹⁷⁷

The editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal* supported the view that home and family constituted the sole career field for a woman to the point of exclaiming, in 1903: 'To teach a girl to sweep and cook would be to lower the standard [of a college education]. Then by all means let it be lowered.'¹⁷⁸ His opinion, which permeated many texts in the journal well into the twentieth century, was not an entirely logical one in view of the fact that many women worked office-hours as paid members of his staff or contributed professionally with articles, drawings, and pictures. Not a few of them were academics: *Daddy-Long-Legs*, like the earlier books about Patty, was introduced in instal-

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Davidson, 'The Ideal Training of the American Girl', *The Forum* 25, March–August 1898, 471–80 (472); Raymond in *Liberal Education*, ed. by Orton, 39 and 49; Thwing, Charles F., 'What Becomes of College Women', *The North American Review* 161, November 1895, 546–53 (553). See also the editorial comment 'The Best Career for Women', *Harper's Bazar* 39:1, 1904–05, 188–95 (188); Marion Harland, 'The Passing of the Home Daughter', *The Independent* 71, 1911, 88–91; and Margaret Deland, 'The Change in the Feminine Ideal', *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1910, 289–302.

¹⁷⁸ Edward Bok, 'The College and the Stove', *LHJ*, April 1903, 16.

ments, and Vassar graduate Jean Webster bargained for it in a businesslike manner. The indefatigable advocate for women's careers, M. Carey Thomas, attempted a comparison between the situation of a male graduate and that of a female. The former, said Thomas, would refrain from shovelling coal in his cellar 'if by more intellectual and interesting labor he could earn enough to pay to have it done for him.' Consequently, the latter should not have to concentrate her efforts on 'household drudgery' if she had options which were better suited to an academic mind.¹⁷⁹ However, her opinion, as well as Starrett's, met with less sympathy than the run-of-the-mill opinions expressed in *The Ladies' Home Journal* among other publications. Although the college girl had been allowed four years of independence and development, neither family nor society foresaw any change of character and mind in the daughter, nor any ambitions leading to a graduate's independent professional calling away from home in compliance with the visions she had encountered at college.¹⁸⁰ In 1900, the *Journal* printed Dr Mitchell's admonishments to new academics: those who looked forward to studying medicine or doing literary work, he stated, even to teaching, should take care if they imagined that their plans would 'release' them from their traditional duties.¹⁸¹

Jane Addams saw the graduate as a person simultaneously assailed by two incompatible demands: the social claim to make use of the education she was taught at college, and the family claim on daughterly care or housewifely duties which she faced afterwards. (Once an unhappy patient of Dr Mitchell's, Addams started the settlement movement.¹⁸²) The family demand usually required skills in domestic work, abilities required of any woman. Scholars investigating the components of the family claim in retrospect have mentioned more aspects than those of domestic skills and care, including social prestige. For instance, if a college-educated woman formed part of the workforce, the father's or husband's inability to support her would be shamefully manifest. Furthermore, members of socially mobile families would feel that she had lost the honour of being regarded as a lady, a lack of status which would also affect the family.¹⁸³ Attempts were therefore made to exalt the importance of

¹⁷⁹ Thomas, 1908, 79.

¹⁸⁰ For parental reactions, see Elizabeth Bisland, 'Educating a Daughter', *The North American Review* 159, November 1894, 627-30; Mrs Burton Harrison, 'Home Life as a Profession', *Harper's Bazar* 33, 1900:2, 148-50; Alice Bartlett Stimson, 'When the College Girl Comes Home', *Harper's Bazar* 42, August 1908, 797-99; Mary Fanton Roberts, 'When the College Girl Comes Home to Stay', *The New York Times*, 26 January 1913, 8. (Hereafter cited as NYT.) For that of a graduate, see Anne Randolph, 'Is the American Girl Being Miseducated?', *LHJ*, September 1910, 9 and 67.

¹⁸¹ Mitchell, 14. Dr Mitchell and his article were mentioned in the section called 'Women's Health'. His opinion that intellectual education ruined the health of girls makes him an odd choice as a speaker for graduates.

¹⁸² Addams is mentioned in Joyce Antler, "'After College, What?': New Graduates and the Family Claim", *American Quarterly* 32, 1980, 409-54 (412).

¹⁸³ Solomon, 117; Newcomer, 175.

woman's work within the home. Though Marion Talbot, for instance, could not support that view (because she maintained that there was actually little left for the graduate daughter to do), she shared the opinion that college should strengthen the family tie.¹⁸⁴ In that way, she tacitly endorsed the 'family claim'.

The debate over 'race suicide'

While female students were practising democracy in the first decades of the twentieth century, actually preparing for new occupations, a controversial issue other than those related to woman's character and place emerged as a topic for debate in magazines: Unease about the future of the graduate as well as that of the nation was stirred when the female scholar was increasingly seen to choose not to marry or otherwise to wed late in life, both of which choices inevitably diminished the likelihood of her having children. (The anxiety marks a shift in point of view compared to a warning issued 1899 in *The Ladies' Home Journal* to the effect that a well-educated woman would receive no offers of marriage.¹⁸⁵ From being regarded as a victim, the graduate had turned into a threat.) The idea that education induced women not to marry grew into an obsession with 'race suicide', and once more women's higher education was called in question.¹⁸⁶ If 'the older American stock' did not produce babies, it was argued, the poorly educated immigrants pouring into the USA would take over, as they tended to have large families.¹⁸⁷ Such prospects were considered detrimental to American society.

Some years before that debate, Maria Mitchell, astronomer and lecturer at Vassar College, had declared that a college education was in fact a good thing where matrimonial considerations were concerned: 'Vassar girls marry late, but they marry well'.¹⁸⁸ Her view was not necessarily reassuring, though: How 'well' was to be understood would obviously depend on who defined it.¹⁸⁹

The new arguments against higher education for women thus continued to focus on woman's duties and place; the site of physical concern was, how-

¹⁸⁴ Talbot (1910), 352 and 358.

¹⁸⁵ Professor D.R. McAnally, 'The American Girl's Chances of Marriage', *LHJ*, March 1899, 2.

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, Millicent Washburn Shinn, 'The Marriage Rate of College Women', *The Century Magazine* 50, 1895, 946–49; Ella Hepworth Dixon, 'Why Women are Ceasing to Marry', *The Humanitarian* 14, 1899, 391–96; 'Marriages Among College Women', *The Outlook*, 5 October 1901, 256–58; "'Race Suicide" and Common Sense', *The North American Review* 176, 1903, 892–900; George J. Engelmann, 'Education Not the Cause of Race Decline', *Popular Science Monthly* 63, 1903, 172–84 (in which the opinion spilled over to the educated man); and 'Why Do Not Educated Women Marry?', *The Independent*, 1909, 966–69.

¹⁸⁷ Solomon, 119.

¹⁸⁸ Mitchell is quoted by Frances M. Abbott in 'A Generation of College Women', *The Forum* 20 (September 1895–February 1896), 377–84 (379).

¹⁸⁹ See Cogan, 75. In Cogan's interpretation, college women would look for 'hardworking, compassionate, and moral' husbands.

ever, somewhat modified. The early anxieties on this score had amounted to fears lest cerebral activities would make ovaries wither. When that worry proved unfounded, academic women were accused of voluntarily contributing less offspring than was considered to be normal and essential to the American nation. Statistics did show a temporary drop in marriage inclination among the early women scholars, quite apart from a natural tendency among academics to marry later than those not involved in higher education. Looking at the figures from a distance in 1984, Mary Cookingham gave economic reasons for these facts: during the Progressive Era, the male labour market (mainly that of business) deteriorated while the female one grew, primarily in social welfare and clerical work. At the same time, teaching became more rewarding and lucrative even for women.¹⁹⁰ Thus men would hesitate to take on the heavy economic responsibility of a family, whereas a woman could support herself. Cookingham's argument forms a convincing challenge to the turn-of-the-century notion that higher education made a woman either unfit/unattractive for marriage or egocentric because her 'overeducation' made her reluctant to accept her womanly duties.¹⁹¹

Professional work

While families and society in general preferred the college graduate to return quietly to her former existence, or copy that of her mother in a happy marriage, fact and fiction alike told of an increasing number of graduates who earned their living away from home. Frances M. Abbott celebrated the thirty-year existence of Vassar College in *The Forum* by enumerating the different kinds of activities and professions in which alumnae were active. No less than one ninth of them were involved in acquiring more scholarly knowledge. Abbott summed up all her information by emphasizing that the majority of alumnae turned their college education to good account 'outside the round of old-fashioned domestic activities.'¹⁹²

An article in the same vein in *The Arena* provides information about such occupations in 1900: 'a great number become teachers, librarians, journalists, or helpers in philanthropic enterprises.' The strikingly unbiased article closes with two distinct opinions: opposition to higher education for girls was fading at the beginning of the new century; and the 'peculiar difficulties' related to the 'disturbing' factors of educated women's low wages and inferior social position would soon disappear.¹⁹³ Both views, as is well known, turned out to be less than well-founded, though differences were greater at

¹⁹⁰ Mary Cookingham, 'Bluestockings, Spinsters and Pedagogues: Women College Graduates, 1865-1910', *Population Studies* 38, 1984, 349-64 (354-59).

¹⁹¹ See, for instance, 'Does Woman Know Too Much?', *Harper's Weekly*, 1903, 1180-81.

¹⁹² Frances M. Abbott, 380 and 384.

¹⁹³ M. E. Blood, 'Educational Problems. III. New England Graduates', *The Arena* 24, August 1900, 214-24 (217

that time. In the early days, Maria Mitchell was paid half the amount the male professors received. When she threatened to resign, a minor raise was granted.¹⁹⁴ In 1908 an anonymous 'bachelor maid' stated that although the male college professor's salary was considered to be inadequate, 'small note' had so far been taken of the amount that a woman in the same situation was offered. It was a sum which 'no man of corresponding scholarship and pedagogic experience would consent to accept'.¹⁹⁵ In the same year, the president of Bryn Mawr held a more optimistic view than that of the bachelor maid, foreseeing at least women's economic independence. Nevertheless, Liva Baker quotes a crude statement of 1910, according to which 'the lady who works has less to eat than the lady who does not. There is no profession open to her that is nearly as lucrative as marriage, and the more lucrative the marriage the less work it involves.'¹⁹⁶ Pay related to sex is consequently mentioned in contemporary texts. However, issues concerned with woman's proper place and/or her encroachment on male territories are far more in evidence.

The content of an academic education and the methods of instruction allowed students to form their own opinions, as it was designed to train their capacity for honest and earnest thought. The inevitable consequence of such pursuits was that an increasing number of college graduates crossed the borderline, invading professions and exhibiting manners previously regarded as typically masculine. They met with dogged resistance. There were, for instance, few areas in which the graduates were actually welcome; 'nobody wants the alumnae', complained one contemporary writer.¹⁹⁷ Though women were able to enter professions like law and medicine, the tasks assigned to them were mostly conventional and feminine: as lawyers, for instance, they tended to do paperwork. A common argument in favour of women in these occupations was that 'women patients and clients had the right to consult professionals of the same sex in order to protect their womanly modesty.'¹⁹⁸ In her investigation of college fiction, Shirley Marchalonis refers to an article of 1885, in which medicine is mentioned as being a 'suit-

and 224).

¹⁹⁴ Newcomer, 163. (Lynn D. Gordon maintains that Maria Mitchell 'demanded salaries equal to the male faculty's for herself and other women teachers'; 1990, 123.) In 1915, Frances Tomlin Marburg emphasized how Vassar students were lectured on 'woman's place' in the 1860s and from the 1890s on her economic position; see 'The Social Life of Vassar Students', *The Vassar Miscellany*, October 1915, 3-39 (13 and 30). More arguments for professional work can be found in Worthington, Harkness, and Ferris.

¹⁹⁵ 'The Salary of the College Woman', *The Independent* 65, 1 July 1908, 88-92 (88).

¹⁹⁶ Thomas, 1908, 71; Baker, 144.

¹⁹⁷ Elsie Clews Persons, 'The Aim of Productive Efficiency in Education', *Educational Review*, December 1905, 500-06 (501). William R. Harper held a similar view in 'The Educational Progress of the Year', *Educational Review* 24, October 1902, 238-70 (262).

¹⁹⁸ Banner, 9-10.

able and available field'.¹⁹⁹ At Vassar, students who intended to study medicine were recommended to choose specific courses in biology in the 1897–98 *Annual Catalogue* (46). Nevertheless, a 1904 article pointed to problems for the pioneers in such areas: a woman might be a doctor if she could attract patients and a lawyer if clients would trust her.²⁰⁰

By 1915, the most popular non-teaching professions among women graduates were related to the new area of paid social work. In a way, this development was within the accepted female sphere, as charity work was traditionally a womanly occupation. On the other hand, women now left their homes for the new professional work, in the course of which they often learnt to wield power. The process towards individual careers started when first-generation college women felt the need to do something for those who suffered in progressive America: as a consequence students and graduates worked in what were known as settlement houses, in which poor immigrants were taught and trained. The settlement movement was started by college-educated Jane Addams, who was mentioned above. She saw how the number of oppressed Americans grew in the wake of a rapidly changing nation. After an inspiring visit to England, she founded Hull-House, Chicago, in 1887. Her experiment grew into an organization which soon spread into other areas. College-educated women devoted much labour to that field, which constituted a major 'social contribution' to American society. Even though, as Gordon points out, it was not remunerated at the time,²⁰¹ women gradually made spectacular careers in that field: in 1912, for instance, a Vassar graduate and experienced settlement worker was made chief of the 'new Children's Bureau in the department of Commerce and Labor.'²⁰²

A college girl would also often choose to work within public health and recreation, in administration, and in the developing field of libraries.²⁰³ Other occupations ranged from magazine writing and editing to business activities as secretaries and accountants. However, Solomon states that as late as the start of the First World War 'conservative parents and businessmen objected to having women on the office staff.'²⁰⁴ (A fictional instance suggests a turning of the tide: in Montgomery's *Anne of Windy Poplars*, a minor character intends to take a secretarial course at university to qualify for a job promising better pay than teaching.)

¹⁹⁹ Shirley Marchalonis, *College Girls: A Century in Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 163; Jane M. Bancroft, 'Occupations and Professions for College-Bred Women', *Education* 5, 1885, 486–95.

²⁰⁰ Lyman Abbott, 5036.

²⁰¹ Gordon, 1990, 31. In 1915, however, salaries in social work are negotiated in Jean Webster, *Dear Enemy* (NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1915).

²⁰² Ellis, ed., 44.

²⁰³ Antler, 1987, 397.

²⁰⁴ Solomon, 130. Many contemporary texts contained lists of various occupations held by women. See, for instance, Mary Caroline Crawford, *The College Girl of America and the Institutions which Make Her What She Is* (Boston: Page, 1905), 291.

In their book about Jean Webster, Alan and Mary Simpson claim that students at Vassar faced contradictory recommendations about their presumably short-lived professional future: on the one hand they were advised to look for occupations other than teaching, while on the other President Taylor kept admonishing them (until 1914, when he retired) that 'teaching was the most socially important of any profession a girl could enter'.²⁰⁵ Conversely, students at Bryn Mawr were urged to experiment in other fields first.²⁰⁶ Similar efforts were boosted by the employment agencies which were established under the auspices of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae for college women who were not interested in educational work.²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, teaching proved the most common choice among graduates. It was also a profession in which women were whole-heartedly wanted and sorely needed. More often than not, though, it is unfavourably depicted in college fiction.

Among all graduates who supported themselves in 1909, three out of four were employed in education. Six years later, the figures had risen to more than four out of five. 'Semiprofession' is a term Solomon assigns to teaching, as well as to other areas which often relied on members of the female sex. She defines it as a denigrating concept, pertaining to 'the female tradition of service to society': the occupations in which women dominated were commonly seen 'as less demanding, less permanent, and more appropriate for women than the prestigious ones reserved for men'. Nevertheless, she claims that for many American women at the time teaching might also have functioned as a parenthetical, but beneficial, occupation on their road to fame in other spheres.²⁰⁸

The majority of college women worked in pre-college teaching, an occupation they were in general barred from once they married.²⁰⁹ Not surprisingly, men who remained in the teaching profession moved up to senior administrative positions (which they also did in nursing and librarianship), and they dominated in university teaching.²¹⁰ Sally Mitchell sees substantial differences between the period when teaching mostly comprised male practitioners and the time when it became feminized: apart from a reduction of wages, requirements for 'cheerfulness and love of children' replaced the earlier ones for 'intellect, system, order, and force of character.'²¹¹ It should be borne in mind that Mitchell's research applies to England; in America, male

²⁰⁵ Simpson, 123.

²⁰⁶ Solomon, 128.

²⁰⁷ The organization was founded in 1882; the two agencies started in 1910–1911. See 'The College Woman and the Vocations', *The Survey* 27, 23 December 1911, 1400–01.

²⁰⁸ Newcomer, 177; Solomon, 126–27.

²⁰⁹ See, for instance, 'Notes and News', *Educational Review* 29, April 1903, 213–14.

²¹⁰ Banner, 10–11.

²¹¹ Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880–1915* (NY: Columbia Up, 1995), 42–43. Mitchell

teachers no longer dominated the profession after 1840. Towards the end of the progressive period, when women teachers were the norm in American primary and secondary education, that feminization in schools sparked a debate about the 'woman peril' in teaching. Boys who were brought up at home and at school by women were said to acquire a coating of femininity which was destructive to the desired masculine character; thus Mitchell's statement about the way in which female and male teachers were expected to differ in their approach seems to apply to American teachers, too.²¹² Again, women were in a lose-lose situation. From the start, college women had been directed into teaching. They had accepted less prestige, reduced wages, and responsibility for both education and upbringing; in consequence, men had left the occupation for more rewarding professions to which few women could as easily gain access. As a result, the female educators were accused of feminizing their male pupils.

It is fitting to end this chapter on that note. By 1914 women *had* gained access to both higher education and the workforce. At the same time, they encountered adversity, as women had done from the start whenever men felt threatened. I now turn to the texts in which the liberal-arts education was fictionalized. After a presentation of the women who wrote them, and a discussion of who read them, I introduce an earlier picture of women's higher education: Lord Alfred Tennyson's poem *The Princess*, which I have used as a reference point when analysing women's college stories.

refers to *Leng's Careers for Girls: How to Train and Where to Train* (Dundee: John Leng, 1911), 194, note 50.

²¹² See Earl Barnes, 'The Feminizing of Culture', *The Atlantic Monthly* 109, January–June 1912, 770–76, and the following articles in *Educational Review*: F. E. Chadwick, 'The Woman Peril in Education', vol. 47, February 1914, 109–19 and Laura L. Runyon, May 1914, 507–12; vol. 48, Leonard M. Passano, September 1914, 185–86 and Anne Bigoney Stewart, November 1914, 380–83; vol. 49, Passano, November 1914, 407–09 and John Eiselmeier, April 1915, 409–12.

2

The 'college story': texts, writers, and audiences

A good college story is perhaps almost as difficult to write as a national hymn.

In an anonymous review of Jesse Lynch Williams, *The Girl and the Game and Other College Stories*, in *The Nation* 87, 16 July 1906, 56.

From 1885 and for some thirty years onwards, the Seven Sisters (the all-female colleges in the east of the USA) were filled with the second generation of students. Some among them had mothers who were alumnae. That time-span forms the period of my research. Even though I make use of other works, my thesis focuses on some college novels which were written by women who graduated from Vassar (Helen Dawes Brown ('78), Julia Augusta Schwartz ('96), Jean Webster ('01)) and Smith (Caroline M. Fuller ('96)). The three former writers had their narratives published about ten years after graduation: Browns' *Two College Girls* appeared in 1886, Schwartz's *Elinor's College Career* in 1906, and Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* in 1912. *Across the Campus* came out a few years after Fuller's senior commencement, in 1899. The fictional events in these writers' books cover three to four years of higher education. Directly, or in flashbacks, reasons are given as to why the protagonists go to college; and the books tell their readers about the direct as well as indirect education that college girls are exposed to when studying away from home. The stories end with the protagonists' last senior days, during which their college quest culminates. In addition, *Daddy-Long-Legs* brings its romance to a happy ending. Though the college narrative stops at that stage, an after-college life is indicated not only by the term used for the finale of the academic education, 'Commencement': discussions among girl characters show how they intend to make use of, indeed develop, the higher education they have gained so gratefully.

The four novels analysed in the ensuing chapters form part of a spate of stories set in men's or women's colleges which appeared before the First World War and found an interested audience in America. Women's college

stories were produced in an atmosphere in which higher education for girls was a contentious issue: it is reasonable to believe that the many articles and books on the subject created a general interest in fictional 'information' about what went on in women's colleges. Conversely, colleges for men were taken for granted. Consequently, male writers usually did not take part in any ongoing discussion about men in higher education (until Owen Johnson criticized student societies and paedagogical approaches at college in *Stover at Yale* in 1912). Many tales of college life are collections of short stories. Some college books focus on one of the college years, which is then indicated in the title. An increasing amount of college fiction from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards belongs to the so-called series books, which were aimed at a young readership.

As the preceding chapter showed, women's education was regarded with mixed feelings in contemporary American society at large. Students of the time cannot have been unaware of the topical debate which related to the experimental enterprise. Nor could the graduates, some of whom – as we have seen – created fictional stories about college experiences. Therefore I regard women's college fiction as part of an ongoing discussion, responding to some of the apprehensions as well as aspirations regarding women's education that were voiced in that discussion.

The 'college story'

According to the *OED* explanation, the term 'college' as used in the USA is typically applied to a small university which has a single curriculum of study. College stories written by men are set in institutions which may today be very large, at times in a co-educational college (Stanford). In the main, women's tales refer to the new single-sex institutions which were established in the north-east of the USA. Some contemporary reviewers of college fiction use 'school' and 'college' indiscriminately when referring to these stories.¹ That confusion might have different explanations. For one thing, it indicates a lack of knowledge, and/or scant appreciation, of academic education or of the fiction which attempted to illustrate it. For another, the similar settings of school and college fiction, especially for girls, may account for the same concepts being used in comments about female fiction: both types of stories deal

¹ See, for instance, Frank C. Myers, the editor of 'The College World', who mentions 'The Captain of the School Team' as being a college story in 'Inside Views of Fiction: VIII-The College Story', *The Bookman* 32, 1910, 440–41. *Elinor's College Career* is reviewed among boarding-school stories as '[a]nother college story' in *NYT*, 27 October 1906. Present-day scholar Sherrie A. Inness writes about the 'school society' in a college novel, comparing the latter with ordinary 'school stories' in *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 14.

with places of residence outside family but within staff and peer control. That control is decidedly stricter in women's than in men's stories; men characters lead a much freer life. The major differences between school and college are located in three factors. One concerns the age of the students. College life takes them beyond their teens: they mature from girls to women during their four-year education. The second is that college students are on their own, unprotected by their families to a far greater extent than school-girls.² The third concerns curriculum and graduation. Like the traditional American high school, college is intimately connected with a liberal-arts education; but the studies progressively demand more in the way of personal involvement and individual thought from the students, who are finally honoured with an academic degree after years of intellectual effort. Furthermore, even though society at large was not prepared to accept it, the education that a graduate had mastered at college could give her access to the professions.

Two scholars who have written books on female college-writing differ slightly in their definition of the 'college story'. Sherrie A. Inness published her study of representation and social transformation in women's college fiction in 1995, the year that also saw the appearance of Shirley Marchalonis' survey of how the college experience had been fictionalized in the course of a century. Inness claims that college stories characteristically track a student's 'progress' from the freshman period through graduation, a statement which has a positive ring to it from an educational point of view.³ Marchalonis defines a female 'college story' as 'fiction about the experiences of women going to college'.⁴ Both 'progress' and 'experiences' are valid terms which function well together in attempts to describe this type of fiction: at a formative stage of their lives, college-fiction characters do develop in the course of miscellaneous events and challenges. If the text evolves around one protagonist, or a few of them, progression should be possible to detect, and it usually is. A story of that kind is characteristically organized according to a chronological outline. The many stories that are essentially made up of short tales lack that structure; consequently an educational development is difficult to trace in them.

The experiences found in college stories usually fall within the boundaries of some common categories. The most important one consists in the woes and joys of social intercourse. Fellow students and the college ambience prove to be forceful educational tools for the development of character; this has been one of the aims of higher education for men as well as for women from the Yale Report onwards. Among the academic subjects, the ones most

² In college stories, it is often pointed out how *far* away from home college girls are.

³ Inness, 11.

⁴ Shirley Marchalonis, *College Girls: A Century in Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995), 1.

often mentioned are Latin and mathematics (compulsory and difficult), English (compulsory and engaging), and the natural sciences. Economics and sociology tend to be popular among the student characters and give rise to exchanges of thoughts and opinions in their leisure hours. Apart from such areas of study, the typical protagonist's college education includes activities which would not be mentioned in any curriculum but which may promote self-confidence and leadership, such as athletic games, debates, stage and choir performances, and excursions into society and the country, as well as responsibility for guided tours on campus. A college story thus contains various elements apart from those that are concerned with intellectual education in the ordinary sense: seminars, lectures, and work on assignments and examinations. The challenges an undergraduate of today faces, as described by Helen Horowitz in her introduction to *Alma Mater*, are quite similar to those that are described in the early fiction. Apart from the fact that girl students would face new, and strict, rules at college, female and male characters encounter the following difficulties: ⁵

[Students] must not only read and study steadily, they must also attempt to break through to creativity. They must learn to live with others away from their families under new and bewildering codes. ... They must keep, lose, make, or not make a sustaining relationship with another. All of this takes place within eight terms of unrelenting work, each ending with papers and examinations that test their abilities and endurance to the breaking point.

The majority of students in women's college fiction are on their own for the first time. As they encounter the unwritten codes of the institution, their social success is dependent on how they adapt. Furthermore, they must learn to strike a balance between strenuous studies and campus life. Horowitz' explanation above is valid for the challenges presented in college fiction; social competence is shown to be as important as intellectual capabilities.

Even though male college stories are less concerned with intellectual work, they have certain features in common with those found in women's campus novels. As will be shown below, several writers before the twentieth century said that they had fictionalized events they had themselves experienced at college. Marchalonis holds that women's college stories belong to the genre of 'domestic fiction, domestic realism, or literary domesticity', whose distinctive feature, she writes, is that the literature was produced out of the writers' personal 'social reality'.⁶ 'Domestic fiction' is, however, a somewhat problematic term when applied to women's college stories. 'Domestic' implies a setting within a home or house.⁷ Used as a defining term

⁵ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*, 2nd edn (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), xviii.

⁶ Marchalonis, 18 and 28.

⁷ John Anthony Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd rev. edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

for such novels as *The Vicar of Wakefield*, it often carries a sentimental undertone. 'Domestic fiction' has become synonymous with 'women's fiction', interpreted as fiction by women, about women, and for women, set in a middle-class environment in which a character is being prepared for marriage. Books of this kind aimed at creating, as Nina Baym writes, a belief in middleclass 'individuals'. (Baym relates the term to stories mostly produced in the antebellum period.)⁸

A woman's college story is admittedly about predominantly middle-class characters. But it is not set in the bosom of a family, nor do the majority of tales end in marriage, which are some of the characteristics commonly associated with domestic fiction. It seems more reasonable to consider female and male college fiction as a genre of their own, sharing some of the characteristics of 'domestic fiction' but possessing others that are peculiar to it, notably the element of combined peer-group influence and intellectual effort typically experienced away from home in an institution which constitutes its own world. Jane S. Smith's approach to girls' series books includes a more apt definition for women's college fiction; apart for the common elements of adventure and romance in them, the series stories are 'novels of manners', providing 'covert instruction in becoming the new woman in a changing society'.⁹ It is not least the narratives illustrating how graduates grapple with their lives after college that show how college experiences have moulded the students out of the characteristics which Barbara Welter elucidated,¹⁰ one of them being 'domestic'.

The way Marchalonis discusses college fiction as being 'domestic' makes for an interesting comparison. Male college-story writers definitely wrote 'out of their social reality', too, and their protagonists also grow toward 'maturity'. In Marchalonis' words, that development involves the 'suppression or refinement of natural instincts' and the 'rejection of self in order to reach an ideal', that ideal being one 'of womanly behavior' in Marchalonis' terminology.¹¹ In my view, male college stories contain the same elements:

⁸ Further illustrations can be found, for instance, in 'Domestic or Sentimental Fiction, 1820–1860' (21 February, 2003) on <http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/en1311/domestic.htm>, which is based on Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820–70* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1978). The second edition (1993) contains a supplementary, new introduction, whose section on 'Bourgeois Sentimentalism and the Public Sphere' applies the concepts of 'domestic' and 'sentimental' to women's fiction (xx–xxxv). Looking at English fiction, Nancy Armstrong traces the origins of the term 'domestic' in 'The Rise of the Domestic Woman', *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 59–95 (notes 269–73). Furthermore, Amy Kaplan expands the definition of 'domestic', relating it to 'national' versus 'foreign' in 'Manifest Domesticity', *American Literature* 70, 1998, 581–606.

⁹ Jane S. Smith, 'Plucky Little Ladies and Stout-Hearted Chums: Serial Novels for Girls, 1900–1920', *Prospects* 3, 1977, 155–74 (164–65).

¹⁰ See my section on 'Womanly characteristics' in chapter one.

¹¹ Marchalonis, 18 and 177.

male characters do suppress their natural instincts, as is evident, for instance, in their brooding at difficult moments; and they certainly develop an ideal of 'manly' behaviour.

In 1962, John O. Lyons dismissed both men's and women's stories in *The College Novel in America*: being primarily filled with 'amusing high jinks', these tales were not of interest for his investigation. Lyons held that a novel of academic life is primarily a social document, a 'thinly disguised [account] of the author's experiences as an undergraduate' – a definition which resembles Marchalonis' above. To awaken his interest as a critic, a fictionalized higher education must have been 'treated with seriousness' by the writer. According to Lyons, few texts written before 1920 were. In his overview, *Two College Girls* and Goodloe's *College Girls* represent the early female fiction as a whole. They are, he says, mainly occupied with instructing young girls 'how to conduct themselves prettily', which in his view is the main theme of all female college fiction.¹² Conversely, I would argue that though most characters do polish their behaviour in the course of their studies, part of that improvement in fact entails character training more than excellence in so-called finishing skills, and is thus very much an 'educational' matter.¹³ Besides, Lyons fails to notice how, in Inness' words, the female narratives 'frequently point out the absurdity of much of the conventional behavior expected of women.'¹⁴ Not least in that sense, the college stories offer interesting insights into early higher education, as subsequent chapters will show.

Unlike Lyons' selection, my choice of texts is not determined by literary quality: they were chosen because of the ways in which the narratives presented higher education to contemporary readers. As chapter one pointed out, I have studied both series books and men's fiction in addition to women's college stories, looking for similarities and differences.

College series books

The new century saw female and male college students entering series books, whose narratives were intended for juvenile readers only.¹⁵ (If reviewed, they were usually mentioned in a few lines under 'Children's Books'.) By that time, both college stories and higher educational institutions for women were established on the market. Furthermore, American girls went to public

¹² John O. Lyons, *The College Novel in America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP), xvi, 68, xvii and 47.

¹³ See chapter one and the section on 'The liberal-arts programme'.

¹⁴ Inness, 15.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Margaret Warde, *Betty Wales, Freshman: A Story for Girls* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1904) and Helen Leah Reed, *Brenda's Cousin at Radcliffe: A Story for Girls* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1902), whose introduction states that the story was written for 'young girls'.

schools, and lending libraries existed in most towns, thanks to the Carnegie endowment. It seems reasonable to assume that publishers and writers discerned a new potential reader-group among pre-college girls and, as Gwen Athene Tarbox writes, that they were 'eager to cash in on the girls' fiction market' at a time when the need for reminiscences among alumnae and the demand for enlightenment in society at large was abating.¹⁶ Characters from a 'privileged background' are more conspicuous in the series books than in women's fiction; for instance, Tarbox points to their expensive vacations.¹⁷ They are not common in women's college novels. Otherwise, campus life in the series books is painted along similar lines as in the stories analysed in this study. As will be seen, however, this category of books affords little scope for complexity and development, which can also be said about series books written for boys. They tended to focus on sports: the heroes are virtuous and boyish at the same time.

In most college series works, one volume covers one college year only. A typical series will thus consist of four books. Often, however, the college period is just one element, preceded and/or succeeded by tales about the same protagonist, or about the main character's friends.¹⁸ The latter structure applies especially to girls' books. Girls' series books were an 'offshoot' of male juvenile series books, claims Jane S. Smith, according to whom boys' series books were 'longer, more respectable, and more expensive versions' of the dime volumes.¹⁹

Alan S. Dikty also links boys' series to the category of dime novels; but in his view the change of content and form was the result of a modified literary taste among readers towards the turn of the century. Dime novels had gained popularity as 'campfire reading' during the Civil War. 'High-pitched excitement' characterized those texts, but that feature, according to Dikty, gave way to a predilection for action with a moralizing zest to it.²⁰ Dikty's contention is sustained by reflections on reader preferences provided by college-

¹⁶ The issue of who read college fiction in general is discussed in 'Women's college stories: writers, reception, and readers' below.

¹⁷ Gwen Athene Tarbox, *The Clubwomen's Daughters: Collectivist Impulses in Progressive-era Girls' Fiction* (NY: Garland, 2000), 45 and 70.

¹⁸ The proper names referring to heroes/heroiness, the following titles are examples of *series set at college*: Phillips Exeter, Butt Chandler, the College Athletic books, Larry Burke, the College Life books, T. Haviland Hicks, and Jane Allen; *series in which some titles are set at college*: Frank Merriwell, Helen Grant, Betty Wales, the Sidney books, the Corner books, the Wide-Awake Girls, Frank Armstrong, Molly Brown, Jean Cabot, Ruth Fielding, Grace Harlowe, Peggy Parsons, the Babs books, Yank Brown, Marjorie Dean, and Beverly Gray. For more information, see *Girls [sic] Series Books: A Checklist of Titles Published 1840-1991* (Minneapolis: Children's Research Collections, University of Minnesota Libraries, 1992) and *The American Boys' Book Series*, ed. by Alan S. Dikty (San Bernardino, California: Borgo, 1986). Shirley Marchalonis provides in-depth analyses of several of the girls' series in *College Girls: A Century*.

¹⁹ Jane S. Smith, 155.

²⁰ Dikty, 7.

story writer Charles Macomb Flandrau.²¹ The new kinds of texts for adult readers may have been influenced by the following three factors in American society, defined by Dikty: the dawn of organized and competitive sports; the feeling among Americans that their nation had a “manifest destiny”; and a growing interest in college education. Those elements had a marked effect on juvenile literature, too, especially on series books for boys.²²

Dikty regards Burt L. Standish (pseud. for Gilbert Patten) as the trend-setter for the series books in hardcover which appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. The many and extremely popular stories about Frank Merriwell (28 volumes) that Standish wrote were published in the century’s first decade and were advertised as the ‘Best of All Boys’ Books’, for instance in the volume of 1903, one of the two in which college is the setting for the protagonist’s adventures.²³ Gradually, boys’ series books came to focus on college, and particularly on team sports, as several titles indicate: the College Athletic Series (1907-1911), for instance, includes *Making the Freshman Team* and *A Sophomore Halfback*. Walter Camp’s *Jack Hall at Yale: A Football Story* (1909) is not part of a series, but the emphasis is the same as in the series books: the students regard studies as a hindrance keeping them away from sports. One of the differences between these books and ‘regular’ men’s college stories is that sports, especially American football, come to the fore in the juvenile literature, eclipsing academic education and other activities found in college narratives for men.

While early boys’ series books were thus linked to action and excitement, the earliest volumes written for girls (from 1850 onwards) were, in Deirdre Johnson’s words, ‘heavily didactic, designed to convey moral and educational information’.²⁴ In apparent consequence, Johnson does not mention any development among female readers similar to the change of men’s literary taste. The moralizing component continued to be an ingredient in the college series; it is also perceptible in college fiction in general. Increasingly, the action in girls’ series books was set in college. Jane S. Smith contrasts the four per cent of American women who actually went to college in that period with the protagonists in series books, nearly all of whom took a room on the ‘campus green’.²⁵ Though extremely popular, series books for girls met with disapproval from some quarters. Tarbox quotes various contemporaneous voices who warned that the stories would stir up unrealistic expectations among

²¹ See the section on ‘Men’s college stories’ below.

²² Dikty, 7.

²³ Burt L. Standish, *Frank Merriwell at Yale* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1903). The volume contains advertisements for various boys’ series.

²⁴ *Girls Series*, vii.

²⁵ Jane S. Smith, 166.

girl readers, and thus be downright detrimental to them.²⁶

Helen Leah Reed's tales about Brenda and her friends started one year before Standish's protagonist Frank Merriwell first appeared in 1901. Reed's second volume, *Brenda's Cousin at Radcliffe*, is the earliest series book about college. It contains interesting details, not least in the form of character responses to the debate about the 'college girl'. Here, however, campus is a more open environment than in other stories, as many students live at home. Therefore the element of 'atmosphere' is not dominant. A well-known writer of minor fiction for all ages, Amanda O. Douglas, was in her sixties when she wrote nine volumes about Helen Grant (1901–1911). She is unusual among college-story writers in that she had not been to college herself. As in Reed's and Standish's books, the protagonist's adventures begin at school. The first series character whom readers are able to follow through and after college is Margaret Warde's Betty Wales, who finishes her education as a senior in the fourth volume (1904–1907).²⁷

Shirley Marchalonis analyses the two characters Helen Grant and Betty Wales, arguing that the former is chiefly an exponent of 'womanly standards'. Helen Grant's fictional experiences are superficial and outmoded, claims Marchalonis, blaming these faults on Douglas's lack of college experience. Nevertheless, even though she points to the 'conventionality of [the] context' and the juvenile readership of series books in general, Marchalonis is impressed with the way in which Warde's character Betty Wales illustrates how college might be a rewarding place in which to develop. The Wales stories describe studies as well as larks and pranks, but they contain little of the character development which features in women's college novels. Betty Wales remains the happy-go-lucky girl extolled by such publications as *The Ladies' Home Journal*. 'Dreadfully the square', continually surprised when appreciated, sophomore Betty is addressed as 'child' (ch. V), 'little girl' (ch. IX), and 'little friend' (ch. XI).²⁸ Another popular series heroine is defined by her innocence, even after her graduation: Molly's suitor promises her mother to let the post-graduate 'stay a child for another year'.²⁹

The plots in the four books on Betty Wales at college dwell on Betty's moral influence on a haughty friend, who gradually adopts a 'sweet, soft' expression. Such a conflict is a feature in Caroline Fuller's *Across the Campus* as well, but while Fuller created a complex character, Warde's protagonist accounts for her friend's flawed behaviour by giving only one of Fuller's rea-

²⁶ Tarbox, 46.

²⁷ Marchalonis discusses the Grant books and their writer on page 95. References to Margaret Warde [pseud. for Edith Kellogg Dunton] and her books about Betty Wales are made throughout Marchalonis' book.

²⁸ College series, not least Warde's books, are still read: *Betty Wales, Sophomore* is available on the net in the Project Gutenberg eBooks from which my quotations are taken.

²⁹ See Nell Speed, *Molly Brown's Post-graduate Days* (NY: Hurst, 1914), 277.

sons: the absence of a mother. Furthermore, introductions in the sequels stress the unchanging characteristics of some students: for instance, sophomore Betty has 'an easy-going fashion of getting through her work'.

Warde's books contain separate groups that are clearly defined with reference to financial means and social background: Betty's bustling friends go abroad for summer holidays, while Betty deplores some hopelessly 'common-place' students from a little town who are completely 'out of it' at college. In the series books that followed Warde's publications, adventure and romance became more prominent features, and at times also sports. Money-based snobbery is in focus: morally good student characters devote much energy to instilling democratic attitudes among students who are differently inclined; clothes, financial extravagances, and ancestry should not determine how students are regarded.³⁰ Money *did* matter at college, however, and series books did not conceal the fact: they contain characters who snigger at students who lack financial means and/or social competence. Like the male character in similar stories for boys – a praiseworthy young man who neither drinks nor smokes – the girl protagonist acts as moral guide for friend and foe alike. Consequently, she might become an ethical model for young readers.

Jane S. Smith points out that the most exciting adventures in girls' stories often involve encounters with other people, for instance the tramps and gypsies found in series books.³¹ In an extended sense, her observation is valid for all college stories: in the college setting, no longer secure in the bosom of her family and reliable friends, a protagonist faces adversities and culture clashes when meeting characters of a kind with whom she would not be familiar. The ways in which such conflicts are solved form essential components in college-fiction plots, in series and in novels, female as well as male.

Men's college stories

College narratives written for a predominantly male readership constitute an interesting foil to women's tales, which makes it rewarding to compare them.

Prefaces to men's college fiction address readers of a particular category: those who attended, had attended, or were generally interested in a specific college. In such introductions, writers seem convinced that no other reader would or could enjoy their literary efforts. For instance, the object of one early story was to offer a 'faithful' picture of Harvard in the 60s; similarly, John Seymour Wood, '74, wished to illustrate the Yale of his time, and James Barnes wanted to do justice to the Princeton spirit.³² Men's narratives were thus intended to convey a picture of life at

³⁰ For a more detailed analysis, see chapter five in Marchalonis.

³¹ Jane S. Smith, 161.

³² George Henry Tripp, *Student-Life at Harvard* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks, 1876); John Seymour Wood, *College*

a specific college, its 'character, incident and atmosphere'.³³ Some were designed exclusively for 'class-mates and contemporaries'.³⁴ The editors of a particular collection of stories stated frankly that the texts were intended for the eyes of Bowdoin members only: 'To others its existence can be but a matter of small concern.' They pointed out, however, as did the editors of *A Book of Bryn Mawr Stories* published in the same year (1901), that though they had applied various perspectives to college life, no picture drawn in a narrative of that kind could be complete.³⁵ In the same vein, Charles Macomb Flandrau claimed to have had 'a very little corner of a very great place [Harvard]' in mind when publishing a collection of stories in 1897.³⁶

Clearly, then, the chief aim of the male graduates who wrote college stories was to produce exciting reminiscences for their fellow alumni. Unlike the women college writers, they did not foresee any widespread interest in information about what a man's college education was like, nor did they seem interested in recruiting new students. Conversely, even a series volume for female readers, *Brenda's Cousin at Radcliffe*, explicitly says in the introduction that it purported to inform readers in general about undergraduate life.

Another important difference between male and female writers of college fiction is seen in their dealing with current stereotyped notions regarding college life. While women graduates took pains to correct unfavourable ideas of what education did to girls (views which have been illustrated in chapter one), male writers rarely addressed the general public's impression that college students led somewhat wild lives. Although protagonists in those college novels have usually gained some moral strength and increased maturity towards the end, the narratives are full of student characters who smoke and drink, bet and play cards – even land in jail.³⁷

Comparing male and female college fiction, one is soon struck by a surprising circumstance: though colleges for male students had a long history when the first college for women opened in 1865, the first male college story was produced only about a decade before Helen Dawes Brown wrote her college novel. Apparently, men did not feel the need experienced by women graduates to use fiction in order to market college education or celebrate their institution during the long period before women became academics.³⁸

Days: or Harry's Career at Yale (NY: Outing, 1894); James Barnes, *A Princetonian: A Story of Undergraduate Life at the College of New Jersey* (NY: Putnam, 1896).³³ Charles K. Field and Will H. Irwin, *Stanford Stories: Tales of a Young University* (NY: Doubleday, Page, 1900).

³⁴ Waldron Kintzing Post, *Harvard Stories: Sketches of the Undergraduate* (NY: Putnam's, 1895).

³⁵ *Tales of Bowdoin: Some Gathered Fragments and Fancies of Undergraduate Life in the Past and Present*, ed. by John Clair Minot and Donald Francis Snow (Augusta, Maine: Press of Kennebec Journal, 1901).

³⁶ Charles Macomb Flandrau, *Harvard Episodes* (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1897).

³⁷ About smoking etc., see note 51 below. The jail incident takes place in Flandrau's *Harvard Episodes*; the story is called 'Butterflies'. Flandrau's reflections on male college stories are an interesting object of study in themselves. See 'Apologia Pro Scriptis Meis' in *Sophomores Abroad* (NY: Appleton, Century, 1935).

³⁸ When men did start writing college fiction, they sometimes included reminiscences from the history of their

Men's college writing peaked between 1895 and 1901, in which period short-story collections as well as novels were published. By that time, college fiction by women for women was an established genre, though the major proportion of women's stories was published slightly later, from 1899 to 1903. For both categories, 1912 was a year of success: Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* gained wide appreciation and was in due course turned into both a play, a musical performance, and films; and Owen Johnson's *Stover at Yale* set off a heated debate about curriculum and societies at men's traditional liberal-arts colleges.

In other words, women's college fiction did not pattern itself on men's: we are dealing with two distinct and largely contemporaneous manifestations of the same literary genre. As we have seen, male writers primarily aimed to entertain their peers – fellow alumni – and both events and characters in their works bear witness to that ambition. A recapitulation of the differences with regard to content between their stories and the ones written by women illustrates the latter's 'educational' (in more than one sense) orientation.

Higher academic education is treated less seriously in male college fiction. For instance, cheating is frequent at men's fictive institutions; but culprits tend to get away with it, faculty members seem bored with it, and fellow students look at it with lenience. At times it actually proves a good investment for the future, as when the main character in *College Days* assists a friend during entrance examinations in the first term – the friend in his turn helps the protagonist to a good business position after graduation.³⁹

Male student characters in general have little interest in studies and scant regard for faculty. In Tripp's novel a student claims that 'study is the last thing [they] come for ... the work is all an imposition, and the instructors are [their] natural enemies.' Another character expounds the reasons behind that view: 'Everybody connected with college seems to use as little common sense as possible in all their doings.'⁴⁰ Not until his junior year does the main character of Wood's *College Days* express satisfaction with the way academic work is structured: 'It was a pleasant surprise to be actually *taught* something in the classroom. Hitherto it had been, apparently, an inspection, an examination with questions of a prying nature directed to points in the lesson, calculated to make [students] flunk and catch them unaware.'⁴¹ The subject which

institutions; for instance, participants on opposing sides in the Civil War might hold hands when dying, because they had been to the same college. See Post, 1895, 145.

³⁹ Wood, 1894. The story was serialized in *The Outing Magazine* from 1891 to 1894 before it was published as a book.

⁴⁰ Tripp, 323 and 448.

⁴¹ Wood, 1894, 347.

has thus caught his attention is 'Political economy', a common favourite among fictional girl students, too.

Social relations are important in all college fiction, but in men's stories the prevalence of fixed categories is more marked. A 'dig' with his nose constantly in books is disliked. A 'scrub' usually lacks money; therefore he cannot get around much and remains out of focus in the story. According to one of James Gardner Sanderson's characters, male students at college can be divided into three groups: apart from athletes, there are those of a religious turn of mind, and those who lean toward beer and chorus-girls.⁴² In women's college fiction, religious students do not form a separate unit; rather – especially before 1900 – spiritual experiences are shared. Girls seldom drink; they do not smoke,⁴³ nor do they associate with men other than relatives and old friends.

Though achievements in sports, particularly in basketball, increase girl characters' popularity among their fellow students, such elements are more important in male fiction, in which it is essential to make great efforts in sports. Success in athletic competitions is the road to popularity in many of these tales. It may, however, suffice for a non-sportive character to show true grit and struggle on uphill; men students must be great in defeat. In *Stover at Yale*, the American football team loses an important match. The coach admonishes the players to swallow the medicine: they must not explain or make excuses but 'grin and take [their] criticism'.⁴⁴ *Harvard Stories* contains a similar experience: a male character proves his strength and stamina during a rowing competition; even though he breaks his sliding-seat, he does not give in but finishes the race in spite of the pain he suffers sliding back and forth on the protruding sharp steel tracks. Girl characters learn similar lessons; but apart from basketball accidents, their experiences are more connected with social relations.

Smith College Stories opens with a chapter focused on an intense basketball match at a women's college, provoking a hostile reaction from a reviewer who clearly thought that strenuous physical action was for men only. The way in which women characters are seen to take part in a fierce corporeal battle apparently confirmed the reviewer's personal view of college girls as coarse sports freaks. Thus he supplied indirect and ironic confirmation of the publisher's opinion that the writer's narratives did in fact illustrate college life and college students.⁴⁵

⁴² James Gardner Sanderson, *Cornell Stories* (NY: Scribner's, 1898; repr. 1906), 9.

⁴³ While men's ambition at college may be to learn how to smoke (Tripp, 323), cigarettes are mentioned in two women's stories only, and the important point is that the girls give up the habit of smoking; see Caroline Macomber Fuller, *Across the Campus* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899; repr. 1932), 438, and Josephine Dodge Daskam (Bacon), *Smith College Stories* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 115.

⁴⁴ Owen Johnson, *Stover at Yale* (NY: Stokes, 1912; repr. NY: Macmillan, 1968), 113. (Johnson had received good reviews for his pre-college stories about 'Lawrenceville', an institution attended by Stover.)

⁴⁵ Arthur Bartlett Maurice, 'The Undergraduate in Fiction', *The Bookman*, July 1900, 424–26. The publishers'

While women characters are anxious to retain and refine what society appreciated – their femininity – men try to come to terms with what they regard as the nation's expectations of them. They should make financial gains in a competitive business market, an achievement for which characters often state that their education does not prepare them. These are prospects they tend to dread, expecting the work to be dreary and the effort too demanding. It is interesting that men characters in college stories are thus apprehensive about their future roles in society whereas women seniors usually express satisfaction, feeling well-prepared in a period when female graduates had fewer options than men in which to make use of their college education.

Stover at Yale (1912) contains severe criticism against the content and forms of the education provided, as well as against snobbish societies at college. Unlike Johnson's book, *Williams Sketches* – a joint enterprise written by undergraduates fourteen years before Johnson attracted attention by being censorious about college – are imbued with a higher regard for the liberal-arts education than is found in most male fiction, possibly because while other writers looked back on their experiences when composing the stories, the Williams students were in the midst of theirs. The benefits and challenges contained in a college education were hence alive to them. One example is supplied by a character who defines the aim of his college in the following terms: 'The college takes a hundred, more or less, crude and unformed boys, and turns them out in four years with their effectiveness doubled and trebled, and a sort of general superficial polish that people call college training.' Another student expresses views similar to those found in women's fiction:⁴⁶

'... [college] has given you new ideas, refined your tastes, developed your character, and given you a broader and more sympathetic view of men and things. And what did you come to college for if not that very thing? ... [Before college] you had only a very narrow circle of associates, all of them with more or less the same interests. You came here, and for three years you have mixed with fellows of all sorts and conditions, rich and poor, gawky farmer boys, and fellows who have every social advantage, gospel sharks and dead game sports; ... you have associated with them on terms of an intimacy ... only possible in such a genuine democracy as the American college.'

In female fiction, the girls are generally enthusiastically uplifted by ideas of that kind. In men's fiction another posture is more common, which is illustrated by an episode in *Stanford Stories*. During a speech delivered by an

advertisements can be found on the final pages of Daskam, *Smith*.

⁴⁶ Arthur Ketchum *et al.*, *Williams Sketches*, ed. by Herbert J. Lehman and Isaac H. Vrooman Jr. (Albany, NY: J.B. Lyon, printer, 1898), 100 and 250–52.

alumnus who points to ideals similar to those quoted above, the male undergraduates either fall asleep or show more interest in the food they will receive afterwards than in the moral vision laid out for them.⁴⁷

Whereas male characters (apart from lecturers) are usually conspicuous by their absence in women's fiction, young and morally elevated women are frequent in men's stories. They guide the male students; relationships are thus formed which tend to end in marriage proposals. At times, a girl of good parentage is contrasted with a vulnerable working-class girl whom the protagonist rescues from an embarrassing situation and to whom he is then attracted, but whom, clearly, he can never marry.⁴⁸ *The Bookman* printed a long review of *Stover at Yale*, in which the plot element of a protagonist involved with a woman of the 'half-world' and her opposite, an 'unimaginable prig', is criticized.⁴⁹ In many cases, college and a girl of his own kind in combination save a young man from wickedness and folly, turning him towards serious work.⁵⁰

Female college stories in the progressive period

The differences between male and female college fiction thus turn on a particular historical circumstance: college education for men was a matter of course, whereas it was deeply controversial for women. As Marchalonis points out: '[p]art of the aim of those who wrote about women in college was to answer the charges of critics.'⁵¹ Generally speaking, these authors were college graduates who had practised their writing skills in yearbooks and college magazines while they were still undergraduates; at times, like Jean Webster, they had been published in papers outside college. A foreword frequently explained the aim and scope of the college, indicating that the genre was considered to be so new, or so controversial, that some briefing was deemed necessary before the reader was let loose on the fiction.

Some years before the new century, an article in *The Critic* raised the question why the college woman was not a conspicuous figure as a writer of lit-

⁴⁷ Field & Irwin, 130–31.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Tripp; Wood, 1894; Barnes; Flandrau, 1897, 244; Ketchum *et al.*; Richard Holbrook, *Boys and Men: A Story of Life at Yale* (NY: Scribner's, 1900); Field and Irwin, 'For the Sake of an Argument', 135–170.

⁴⁹ Brian Hooker, 'Nine Books of the Month: Owen Johnson's *Stover at Yale*', *The Bookman* 35, 1912, 309–312 (310).

⁵⁰ The following books, for instance, contain elements of what is discussed above. Cheating: Tripp, 16; Wood, 1894, 40; Flandrau, 1901, 223. Drinking/smoking: Tripp, 24; Wood, 1894, 148; Ketchum *et al.*, 62, 156, and 242. Attitudes to faculty and studies: Tripp, 66, 323, 448; Jesse Lynch Williams, *Princeton Stories* (NY: Scribner's, 1895), 'The Little Tutor'; Post, 232–39; Flandrau, 1897, 'Wolcott the Magnificent', 77–178, and 'A Dead Issue', 249–298; Ketchum *et al.*, 62 and 160–61; Flandrau, 1901, 58–94, 232–89; Jesse Lynch Williams, *The Adventures of a Freshman* (NY: Scribner's, 1899), 122; Field and Irwin, 185; Johnson, 82 and 120. Moral improvement: Tripp; Barnes; Ketchum *et al.*, Williams, 1899; Johnson. Work afterwards: Post, 162–67; Wood, 1894, 429. Love story: Tripp; Wood, 1894; Barnes; Holbrook, 1900; Johnson.

⁵¹ Marchalonis, 29.

erature in general. One tentative answer was that the training of her critical mind throughout higher education made her cautious in her writing.⁵² This conclusion – that college taught the student how she would always be inspected and observed, and that she adapted to this treatment by being self-critical – recurs in college tales. A student in *Vassar Studies* declares that college has taught her the extent of her limitations, while another girl establishes that the ‘aim of the college course is to teach criticism of the world, others, and ourselves’.⁵³ If she should attempt to be published, a fictional character learns in what field she must do it, namely the one she had experienced herself.⁵⁴ Even when she is successful in such an enterprise, she is aware that her writing is considered to be of minor value, because of her gender or because of the target audience. L. M. Montgomery’s graduate character Anne expresses that insight in the following words: ‘Oh, I do little things for children.’⁵⁵

Consequently, female writers of college stories in particular may have been used to anticipating criticism. They wrote in a genre in which form and structure were still in the making, fearing, furthermore, that they could not do justice to their college experience, nor satisfy readers who either knew college from the inside or had formed their opinions of these institutions from articles in the popular press. On the other hand, graduates were secure in their knowledge: they *had* been to college and they did know what they were talking about. In addition to problems with their self-confidence, women writers of college stories had to contend with expressions of masculine superiority in reviews and other pieces by male writers, who mocked them because they seemed unaware of the ‘nonentities [that] Harvard and Yale, Columbia and Princeton, [poured] out every year by the hundreds and thousands’, being over-impressed with the comparatively few ‘marvellous types of womanhood that [had] passed through [Vassar’s] halls’.⁵⁶ Both female (and male) college-story authors gradually gained more self-assurance, however; towards the end of the progressive period no novel opened with an *apologia* for possibly misrepresenting college life, nor with a declaration of intent.

Female college stories certainly interact with attitudes in society as they are articulated in contemporary non-fictional texts. For instance, the idea that young women in higher education were supposed to look and behave according to a prescribed formula is illustrated by the way in which *College Girls* was reviewed. These ‘light’ fictional sketches were appreciated because

⁵² Albert Frances Doughty, ‘The College Woman in Literature’, *The Critic* 24, 5 October 1895, 209–10.

⁵³ Julia Augusta Schwartz, *Vassar Studies* (NY: Putnam’s, 1899) 186 and 202.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Jean Webster, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (Century, 1912; repr. Puffin Classics, 1995), and Marian Kent Hurd and Jean Bingham Wilson, ‘When She Came Home from College: A Story of an American Home’, *LHJ*, May 1909, 11, 12, 78, 79; June 1909, 13, 14, 48; and July 1909, 16, 42, 43.

⁵⁵ L.M. Montgomery, *Anne’s House of Dreams* (Boston: Page, 1917; repr. NY: Bantam, 1992), 136.

⁵⁶ *Vassar Studies* reviewed in NYT, 19 August 1899, 546–4.

the learned girls in them had 'a way of keeping their knowledge hidden'. In addition, every one of them came across as 'a most attractive creature' and a 'social animal'.⁵⁷ Clearly, that reviewer had expected that a woman's intellectual training would turn her into some sort of freak, feeling pleasantly surprised that Goodloe's students retained their freshness and natural feelings despite their intellectual aspirations. It was left to the reader of the review to wonder what college actually did for women, apart from threatening to rob them of their femininity.

College-story writers apparently knew what pitfalls they might encounter when challenging the idea of the stereotyped 'college girl'. An episode in *Vassar Stories* illustrates their apprehensions: students responsible for a college paper discuss the difficulty of persuading an audience that the same diversity existed among college students as was common among young women elsewhere. One of the editors sighs: '... if you write about the work people say "how women grind in their narrow conception of an education." And if you write about the fun they say "only silly boarding-school girls after all, with no earnestness or cultivation."' "⁵⁸ Josephine Dodge Daskam and those responsible for *Bryn Mawr Stories* attempted to argue against the notion of 'either-or' in their introductions.⁵⁹ A 'college girl' could not be defined in such terms, they claimed; rather, a woman student was as complex a person as any other girl.

College was bound to make a difference, however, and a girl who went to college would not develop in the same manner as one who stayed behind and occupied herself in a restricted family environment. Two girls might be bosom friends initially, like L. M. Montgomery's characters Anne and Diana. Yet, they would inevitably move in different directions because of their divergent experiences. There were several stereotyped images of the college girl to refute for such people as the editors of the Bryn Mawr collection: the Gibson/Fisher/Christy type, the grind, the mannish student, and other unattractive representations of learned womanhood.⁶⁰ In one of the stories, a character claims to be neither 'sweet and lovely' nor 'horrid and disagreeable', which suggests a wish to be seen in the character of an ordinary young woman. Though she is a student who claims to harbour strong intellectual ambitions, she happily leaves college prematurely to marry, which calls into question the gains of a college education.⁶¹ The narrator takes a tolerant view of her behaviour.

⁵⁷ *College Girls* reviewed in *The Critic*, 18 April 1896, 271.

⁵⁸ Gallaher, 'The Moulders of Public Opinion', 43–64 (61).

⁵⁹ *A Book of Bryn Mawr Stories*, ed. by Margaretta Morris and Louise Buffum Congdon (Philadelphia: Jacobs, 1901). Hereafter, this book is cited as *Bryn Mawr Stories*.

⁶⁰ See chapter one and the section on 'Woman's deportment and appearance'.

⁶¹ *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'Catherine's Career', 203–235.

The Bryn Mawr contributors did not only aim to show that girls at college were no different from other girls. They also emphasized that 'Bryn Mawrtys' constituted a cross-section of Americans, coming, as they wrote, from 'all parts of the country, from all sorts of different surroundings'. In other words, they were keen to promote the idea of Bryn Mawr as a democratic institution in which any girl would find her place. Similar pieces of information may have functioned as PR material aimed at increasing the number of college students. However, Julia Augusta Schwartz emphasized in her first college book that aptitude and approach were another matter. Shared capabilities and attitudes to education ensured that college was, after all, a fairly homogeneous society, made up of girls whose tastes and values were basically the same.⁶²

Another goal of the female college writers was to inform readers at large about college life. Schwartz indicated the complexity of that task when she claimed that her purpose in writing *Vassar Studies* of 1899 was twofold. Although 'incomplete and inadequate', her representation of a college education was intended to provide the public with a 'truthful' and 'faithful' picture of 'the life in such a community', an educational and residential society which was an enigma for the major part of the American population.⁶³ That ambition seems reasonable. Towards the end of the century, the number of female students was rapidly increasing, even though colleges were still open only to the chosen few. For girls who had no recourse to alumnae in the vicinity and could not visit a place of higher education, college stories may have provided a particular incentive to apply to one, or at least given them something to dream about. On that point, I agree with Inness: even though the stories were never actual depictions of college and campus life, they must have had a certain influence on how readers imagined it to be.⁶⁴ *Elinor's College Career* offers a fictional example: a character has used college fiction as the basis for both her information about academic studies and her expectations of them; she proves to be familiar 'with every volume of college stories available in library or book shop'. When that novel was written, there were quite a few to choose from.⁶⁵

However, Schwartz's intention of providing information for prospective students coexisted with another aim, the one most frequent among male writers: offering memories in a literary form for alumnae, a group of which

⁶² See Schwartz's introduction in *Vassar Studies*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Inness, 3–4. When *Smith College Stories* was reviewed in *The Nation* 71, 19 July 1900, 55, the same issue was raised: 'If, indeed, it be possible that there is in the world of fact or fiction a place satisfactorily known as Smith ...'.

⁶⁵ Julia Augusta Schwartz, *Elinor's College Career* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1906), 38.

the writer was a member. Unlike a general audience looking for information in an entertaining form, they would have vivid memories of, and great veneration for, their *alma mater*. Gallaher's *Vassar Stories* tale set among college editors indicates the difficulties when attempts were made to satisfy the two groups of readers: "'... the college story is the hardest in the world to write. If you explain customs and general surroundings enough to enlighten the world without, the grads. are bored. If you don't explain, the public are bored,'" said Rose who knew.' Another editor settles for what she considers to be more manageable challenges: "'Thank you, I'd rather write two purpose novels and a tract on higher mathematics than one college story,'" said Anna, who also knew.'⁶⁶ When *Smith College Stories* was published in 1900, Daskam's publisher, Scribner's, who quite naturally wanted a large audience, proudly advertised the collection as possessing 'a real value', because it provided insights into women's undergraduate life.⁶⁷ Conversely, a Smith graduate reviewed the collection as being too difficult for the general public. Presumably she shared several male college writers' opinion: with no actual experience of college life, readers could neither be interested in nor entertained by it.⁶⁸

Daskam's collection dealt with the 'college girl' in general. In her first college volume, Schwartz stated that she wanted to express the 'personality of modern Vassar'.⁶⁹ Similarly, the editors of *Bryn Mawr Stories* felt a demand for individual 'self-expression' on the part of their particular fifteen-year-old college. They certainly had critical alumnae readers in mind when pointing out that such an attempt was doomed to fail because a book could 'never adequately represent the college life'. On that point, the aims and anxieties resemble those expressed by male writers of college fiction.

My work includes references to more narratives which, though not set at college, illustrate the early days of higher education for North American women. For instance, both L. M. Montgomery and Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about this period, including interesting characters and episodes which have a bearing on attitudes to women in education. The same is true for instance of a predecessor such as *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, by Kate Douglas Wiggin.

Besides, in my research I have made use of some stories which illustrate how graduates come to terms with their after-college lives. For obvious rea-

⁶⁶ Gallaher, 60–61.

⁶⁷ The last pages of *Smith College Stories* advertised the following, female and male, college-story-titles, published by Charles Scribner's Sons: *Smith College Stories*, *College Girls*, *Across the Campus*, *Boys and Men*, and *Cornell Stories*.

⁶⁸ Martha Cutler, 'Smith College Stories', *Harper's Bazar* 33, 1900:1, 350.

⁶⁹ Schwartz, 1899.

sons, they are no college stories. Still, the writers attempted to visualize the tug-of-war an educated woman would face, set between the demands posed by her gender role and her position as an academic. In some of the stories, college education and its implications are thrown overboard in favour of marriage and household duties, as in 'Nan's Career' by Mary R. P. Hatch, serialized in *The New England Magazine* 1910. Other contemporary stories point to different solutions, however.

One of them is 'When She Came Home from College: A Story of an American Home', printed in *The Ladies' Home Journal* 1909. As was the case with several other tales, it was turned into a book almost immediately after, in this case by Houghton and Mifflin. The narrative illustrates the practical problems that a college graduate would face if she had to shoulder the responsibility for home and children. Marian Kent Hurd and Jean Bingham Wilson, the joint writers, based their story on four components: practical work in a household which could seldom rely on prefabricated products and in which servants posed problems; a male world-view which did not question the divide between men's and women's spheres; a girl graduate's overconfidence in herself and in the superiority of academic, theoretical knowledge even about matters in which she was inexperienced; the actual success of a college education which taught the girl to learn from her mistakes, and of the social training which trained her to apply both humour and resourcefulness to unfamiliar tasks which had exhausted her practically experienced mother. The story ends without indicating a romance that might have forced the graduate heroine to choose between her own professional aspirations and woman's traditional duties.

Webster attempted to solve the problematic issue of studies and marriage. In *Dear Enemy*, a graduate learns that she has resources for leadership, only dimly perceived by herself but obviously enhanced by her college education. In addition, a network among former, and very capable, students is implied. The protagonist rejects the option of a marriage in which she must remain a social butterfly, preferring independence. When she accepts another proposal, she looks with confidence to a future in which she and her husband will be working side by side to improve society.

The latter two stories were written towards the end of the progressive period, when college titles of the kind investigated in this book had passed their peak. Possibly the demand for such narratives had diminished, though the series versions for young girls continued to be popular. Nevertheless, many college stories remained in print. In 1930, a writer of a 'Reader's Guide' professed to long for reprints of narratives containing such characters who could function as 'models and patterns for young girls'.⁷⁰ However, she had

learnt that it would be necessary to 'remove all the theology and most of the tears to win a modern audience' for that kind of literature. Though Fuller's story was advertised among titles for readers more advanced in age, it might be argued that the volume is of the desired kind – no such revision was made of it, however, when the novel was reprinted as late as 1927 and 1932.

Women's college stories: writers, reception, and readers

In fiction, several female characters attempt to have their literary efforts published. As we have seen, so did real college graduates of both sexes. For example, material in Vassar's Special Collections shows how assiduously Jean Webster prepared herself for a professional writing career by collecting words and phrases as well as making comments on books she read.⁷¹

Webster is by far the best known of the four writers whose college stories I analyse in depth. At the time, her mother's uncle Mark Twain (pseud. for Samuel Langhorne Clemens) was greatly pleased with her 'bright', at times 'brilliant' workmanship.⁷² In an article printed by several newspapers, she advised prospective writers to work with the techniques necessary for a writer before attempting to be published.⁷³ Her first book, *When Patty Went to College*, received attention from far and near and sold well, 'close to a hundred thousand copies'.⁷⁴ Thus successful only two years after leaving college in 1901, Webster told a classmate that she had never expected to write a college book, an attitude which her biographers claim to understand: in their opinion, it was 'not surprising considering how very bad such books usually were.'⁷⁵ In the time-span between the

⁷⁰ Vassar College Library houses the Jean Webster McKinney Collection, in which a large number of press clippings are included. Unless other information is provided, statements and quotations taken from contemporary reviews, comments on Webster's books, and article information about the writer are from that collection, in which dates and names are at times difficult to make out.

⁷¹ See boxes 18, 19.2-4, 20.1, 21.1, 22.2-4, 23.1-3, 23.5-7, and 24 in the Jean Webster McKinney Collection.

⁷² Simpson, Alan and Mary, *Jean Webster Storyteller* (Tymor Associates, 1984), 67. The comment was made after Webster's first college story was published.

⁷³ Ruth M. Byers, 'Jean Webster Soon to Be Bride: Author to Wed Glenn McKinney Gives Advice to Young Writers', September 1915.

⁷⁴ See Anne Kathryn Phillips, 'Domestic Transcendentalism in the Novels of Louisa May Alcott, Gene Stratton-Porter, and Jean Webster' (UMI Ann Arbor, unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Connecticut, 1993), 152. The Simpsons, 58-64, write about the initial phases of the stories in *When Patty Went to College*, starting by referring to an interview with Webster published 1915 in NYT. At that point, Webster claimed that the Patty stories were collected among the college 'tragedies' she wrote for *The Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier* while still a student, which were 'done in the same chatty style' she had used then. In December 1901 the Patty tales were again published in *The New York Truth*. After some changes and the addition of further stories, Century brought out the book two years later. However, the Simpsons were unable locate the stories in the *Courier*; only the 'furnishings' could be identified.

⁷⁵ Simpson, 63.

narratives about Patty and Judy, Webster tried her luck with juvenile fiction. After a decade she returned to the college setting in *Daddy-Long-Legs*, a tale originally published in instalments in *The Ladies' Home Journal*.⁷⁶ Her last story, *Dear Enemy*, was actually among the top ten titles in fiction by 1916, though *Daddy-Long-Legs* was more popular in the long run. That success was due to a 'slow steady sale'; *Daddy-Long-Legs* never appeared on an annual list.⁷⁷ Over the decades, Webster's three college books have been reprinted several times. By 1965, *Daddy-Long-Legs* had been translated into eighteen languages.⁷⁸

There are great differences between Jean Webster's classic story and other college novels. What meets the reader's eye initially is the title, *Daddy-Long-Legs*: in the first place, it refers to a man and in the second, it carries no indication that the narrative is in fact a college story. Next, this college novel consists of considerably fewer pages than earlier books of the same genre.⁷⁹ Furthermore, although an omniscient narrator introduces Judy's background, the overall structure of the college tale is that of an epistolary novel.⁸⁰ It is restricted to one perspective only, that of Judy who is allowed an academic education on the understanding that she informs an anonymous trustee about it in writing.⁸¹ In that way, letters directed to the protagonist's shadowy benefactor make up the entire college story. No other mail, and therefore no other perspective than the protagonist's – apart from the one contained in the introduction – is recorded, although such correspondence is in fact mentioned: some of the letters are answers to short and formal notes from an unknown 'secretary'. In the second half of her education, Judy mentions letters exchanged with, respectively, the uncle and brother of her two room-mates. None of those letters appears in the novel, however.

An interesting detail in the novel, unusual in a college story, is Webster's attempts at playing with a fictional device: if Judy had been stolen from her father as a baby girl and she and her benefactor had been characters in a

⁷⁶ Seven of the stories, which were afterwards published in *Just Patty*, appeared in *LHJ* under the heading 'When Patty Went to Boarding School'. They were more financially rewarding (\$1,750) than Judy's adventures in the same magazine (\$1,500), in spite of Webster's bargaining for the latter story. See Simpson, 127 and 148–49.

⁷⁷ Alice Payne Hackett, *60 Years of Best-Sellers: 1895-1955* (NY: Bowker, 1956), 121.

⁷⁸ Simpson, 8.

⁷⁹ The Puffin Classic edition of Webster's novel of 1995 contains 185 pages, which is more than a hundred pages shorter than the average college story, *Across the Campus* being the longest – 441 pages.

⁸⁰ In 1907-08 *The New England Magazine* published H. B. Adams's 'Letters of a Wellesley Girl'. It is the only other story in which college events are commented on by one girl – as in *Daddy-Long-Legs* – writing to her, in this case real, father. It ends on a romantic note: a graduate friend accepts an offer of marriage from an Italian artist who is actually a prince. The name of the very respected college dean is interesting: Miss Pendleton.

⁸¹ Judy was christened Jerusha, but she changes that name after less than three weeks at college. In this book Webster's protagonist is consistently called 'Judy'.

novel, the discovery that they were in fact father and daughter 'would be the denouement, wouldn't it?' Furthermore, Judy feels like a made-up heroine in a storybook and dreams of seeing her own portrait on the frontispiece of a book containing the letters of Judy Abbott.⁸²

Webster's humorous and sketchy illustrations (which should be understood as being drawn by the heroine to illustrate her letters) also deviate from the norm in other college stories, whose occasional pictures show slender and gracious young women in elegant, long dresses, as in, for instance, Webster's first college story, *When Patty Went to College*, illustrated by one C. D. Williams.

In fundamental respects the main character differs from earlier college protagonists: her origin is obscure, her schooling faulty, and her cultural capital small.⁸³ (When *The Ladies' Home Journal* advertised the serial about her, it was aptly claimed that 'she's never been in a story'.⁸⁴) Her original financial situation would probably have precluded an educational success story.⁸⁵ Another feature makes Webster's novel stand out from other female college stories: quite a few of Judy's letters are written away from campus, in environments and among people that bear no resemblance to the environment she is familiar with from her life before college.

Daddy-Long-Legs does not end, as most college stories do, with the students' final Commencement and their general discussions about the future, but with the culmination of a love story. It is a more salient feature in Webster's novel – and may in part explain the book's success – than the odd suitor and marriage proposal which are at times included in earlier college books. The same can be said of *Dear Enemy*, Webster's last novel, in which Judy's friend Sallie fulfils the former orphan's dream of progressively changing the institution in which Judy was raised.

Webster's tales about college students and graduates found many readers, were favourably reviewed⁸⁶ and made her famous, even more so when *Daddy-Long-Legs* was performed on stage. She had actually thought of making the tale about Judy into a play before settling for the novel form.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 79, 92, 155.

⁸³ A Vassar reviewer was critical of the portrayal of Judy's adaptation to college studies; in particular the writer wonders how the orphan met the college entrance requirements: 'Furthermore the average college girl would blanch with horror at the thought of moving as Jerusha Abbott does with serene, unconscious grace from the snatches of study granted an imposed-upon-maid-of-all-work to the high educational standards of a good woman's college.' Gabrielle Elliot, 'Reading Notices: *Daddy Long Legs* [sic]', *The Vassar Miscellany*, November 1912, 52–53.

⁸⁴ *LHJ*, April 1912, 1.

⁸⁵ As a self-supporting student, Judy would not have had time for self-reflection, according to the conclusion of an article about self-supporting college students which was based on answers from 60 colleges: 'It takes indomitable grit to earn one's way through college.' Professor Orlando F. Lewis, 'The Self-supporting Student in American Colleges', *The North Atlantic Review* 179, November 1904, 18–30 (26).

⁸⁶ Most of the reviews in the Vassar collection express favourable views: *When Patty Went to College* was

According to Phillips, the show 'swept triumphantly into New York after playing longer in Chicago than any other play of the time'.⁸⁷ Most spectators were delighted with it; President Woodrow Wilson watched the play and 'nearly laughed himself out of his chair over the college scene', as Jean Webster wrote in a letter.⁸⁸ But some few reviewers of the stage version refused to sing along: college-fiction writer Flandrau, for instance, maintained that even though 'a large audience was pleased by *Daddy-Long-Legs* ... [he] thought it was abominable slush.'⁸⁹

In 1915, Webster was hailed as the 'Highest Paid Woman Writer'; at that point, her book royalties averaged more than \$100,000 a year. Three years after Webster's death in childbirth in 1916, Mary Pickford played Judy in the first filmed version. In the 1950s Janet Gaynor played Judy on the screen while Fred Astaire and Leslie Caron danced a romantic and sentimental film version in which only the name, 'Daddy-Long-Legs', remained unchanged from the original story.

'Jean Webster, author' is included in the following volumes: *Woman's Who's Who of America* (1914–1915), *The Junior Book of Authors* (1934), *Twentieth Century Authors* (1942), *Who Was Who in America* (1943), *Notable American Women* (two columns, 1971), *American Women Writers* (1979), and *American National Biography* (two columns, 1999). Webster was a 'skilled craftsman who gave much care to achieving a direct and lucid style', writes Rachel Salisbury, describing Webster's time-consuming and meticulous work with manuscripts, which is confirmed in the Simpsons' volume. Susan Sutton Smith emphasizes the humour, lack of sentimentalism, and lively prose in Webster's college stories. Linda Schermer Raphael defines Webster's fiction as 'serious in purpose': though Webster was committed to social good, working for the improvement of orphanages and serving on committees for prison reform, she never fell into the snare of writing didactic fiction.⁹⁰ Raphael emphasizes the strength of Webster's writing, in particular with reference to Dikty's assertion that readers began asking for stories with a moral twist

'deeply interesting' (*Columbia Literary Magazine*), its author 'gifted' (*Express LA*), and the tale 'one of the best books of college stories' (*Education*), 'a relief after the sentimental gush or solemn preachments or the dreary misdemeanors of the typical college stories' (recorded in Simpson, 64); *Daddy-Long-Legs* presented an 'intimate description of an American Girls' College' (*Punch*, 1913), had 'the delicate precision of an artist' who gives the 'suggestion rather than the crude details' (anon.), and proved her '[s]kill', 'delicate touch', and 'strong and clear conception of character' (*NYT*, 12 October 1912, 612); *Dear Enemy* was 'solid stuff' (*The Bookman*, 1915), representing 'the fresh attitude of the college girl' toward unimaginative methods (*NYC Telegraph*, 1915) and a protagonist's 'sound practical mind [which was] backed up by a college education' (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 5 November 1915).

⁸⁷ Phillips, 1993, 169.

⁸⁸ Simpson, 156.

⁸⁹ Flandrau, 'Why Is a Critic, Anyway?', *The New York Dramatic Mirror*, 18 December 1915 (reprinted from *St. Paul Pioneer Press*).

⁹⁰ Rachel Salisbury, 'Jean Webster' in *Notable American Women 1607–1950*, ed. by Edward T. James, Janet James,

towards the turn of the nineteenth century. Irrespective of whether one feels that the word 'didactic' can be applied to Webster, her books do have a 'message': individual development and choice for women, with a combination of femininity and independence.

Among Webster's three main college protagonists, Judy is the only one who has been subjected to extensive literary criticism. Many critics, however, have been condescending towards *Daddy-Long-Legs*. In 1976, School Governor Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, teacher and journalist, dismissed the story, regarding the Judy character as a mere 'soap opera orphan'. Furthermore, the epistolary novel is in their view 'a literary form which better writers than Jean Webster [had] found cumbersome'. The two writers reviewed the novel (and Montgomery's books about Anne) as representing 'the lowest common denominator of popular taste'.⁹¹ Some ten years later, Janice M. Alberghene concurred with another view which Cadogan/Craig held, namely that the main 'story' in fact concerns a male protagonist who wants to fashion a good wife for himself. Alberghene saw Jervis Pendleton as a 'sugar daddy with money', who waited like a spider in his web for his victim to graduate and thus be worthy of him.⁹²

In both cases, the critics read carelessly. As will be seen, the Judy character presented in the letters is far from the blithe and submissive young woman sketchily drawn by Cadogan/Craig; nor does she gain her sense of self-worth because of the presents she receives from her benefactor, as Alberghene claims. Obviously, these critics have failed to notice how Judy develops increasing insights about herself at college. The lack of substance in the sweeping statements about Webster's classic story is indicated by Cadogan/Craig's consistent misspelling of Jervis as 'Jarvis' (Pendleton) and by Alberghene's unfortunate use of the spider metaphor: a crane fly, nicknamed daddy-long-legs, is not a predator, but a 'harmless, slow-flying' insect 'usually found around water or among abundant vegetation' – certainly not waiting for its prey by an intricately woven sticky web.⁹³ (As it turns out, the proper characterization of a daddy-long-legs is more apt for Mr Pendleton.)

and Paul S. Boyer, vol. III, 1971, 555–56; Susan Sutton Smith, 'Jean Webster', *American Women Writers: A Critical Guide from the Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. by Lina Mainiero, 4 vols (NY: Ungar, 1979), 344–45; Linda Schermer Raphael, 'Webster, Jean' in *American National Biography*, ed. by John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, vol. 22 (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 869–70; *Who Was Who in America: A Companion Volume to Who's Who in America*, vol. 1, 1897–1942 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis, 1943). Bibliographical references are provided in *Woman's Who's Who of America*, 1914, as well as in two books edited by Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft: *The Junior Book of Authors* (NY: Wilson, 1934), and *Twentieth Century Authors* (NY: Wilson, 1942).

⁹¹ Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, *You're a Brick, Angela! A New Look at Girls' Fiction from 1839 to 1975* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1976) 105–10.

⁹² Janice M. Alberghene, 'Daddies' Girls' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 12, 1987:2, 75–78 (75).

⁹³ *NEB*, 3: 712.

When assessing *Daddy-Long-Legs* it is important to separate the performances on screen and stage from the original tale. Cadogan/Craig seem to have merged their reading with memories of such performances in which character development and scholarly achievements mattered far less than the element of comic romance. According to one of their hostile comments, Cadogan/Craig expected Judy to burst out into song at any moment – a vision which had materialized when the two critics published their book, but the musical was performed decades after the novel was first published.⁹⁴

However, *Daddy-Long-Legs* was approved by other critics of the 1970s. When Jane S. Smith investigated 'Serial Novels for Girls 1900–1920' in 1977, she added in a note that Webster's story is superior to such books as *Across the Campus*, having 'done much to intellectualize the image of the college girl, but nothing to reduce her charm'.⁹⁵

In the 1990s, Webster critics tended to express similar positive views. Marchalonis acknowledges that *Daddy-Long-Legs* is more than a 'well-handled Cinderella plot It remains fresh because the reader shares Judy's sense of discovery, her amazed delight at what is happening to her'.⁹⁶ In Gertrud Lehnert's opinion, Judy's 'autonomy rather than her dependency is rewarded' in the novel which she mistakenly characterizes as a 'boarding-school novel'. Lehnert defines the book as a female 'Bildungsroman'; Webster's text does not contain the characteristics typical of girls' literature, which has, she writes, always been a 'highly didactic genre'.⁹⁷ In the same positive vein, Karen Rosenberg states that in her opinion Judy epitomizes 'strength and fortitude', and might consequently act as a model for female readers when they have to face their own 'adversities'.⁹⁸

If Jean Webster is the most famous writer in my quartet and one who pointed to a possible combination of higher education, profession, and marriage for a college woman, Helen Dawes Brown is the most complicated. Brown wrote the first female college novel, *Two College Girls*. It is witty at times; its students are of varied characters, and readers would realize that professions were subsequently possible. Three years are depicted, and the entrance examinations, lessons, excursions, and Commencement are illustrated in informative detail. Two characters share living quarters and are gradually seen to develop in the course of that close contact with each other.⁹⁹

As Shirley Marchalonis points out, Brown grew up in Concord,

⁹⁴ Cadogan/Craig, 106.

⁹⁵ Jane S. Smith, 174: note 7.

⁹⁶ Marchalonis, 62.

⁹⁷ Gertrud Lehnert, 'The Training of the Shrew: The Socialization and Education of Young Women in Children's Literature', *Poetics Today* 13, 1992: 1, 110, 115–16.

⁹⁸ Karen Rosenberg, 'Daddy's Girl', *Women's Review of Books* 10, Nos 10–11, July 1993, 23–24.

⁹⁹ Helen Dawes Brown, *Two College Girls* (Boston: Ticknor, 1886).

Massachusetts, and she may well have absorbed progressive ideas about education before college; 'her Vassar classmates nicknamed her "Emerson" because the sage himself had written one of her letters of recommendation'. One of her classmates, the later suffragette Harriot Stanton (Blatch), was politically active. Lynn D. Gordon claims that Brown was highly influenced by her, whereas Marchalonis quotes Stanton's autobiography to the effect that the latter was surprised when Brown thanked her for having taught her to read newspapers, which does not point to influence of a radical kind.¹⁰⁰ After graduation Brown studied abroad, was granted an M.A., and returned as a lecturer to Vassar. In 1889 she became one of the trustees of the new Barnard College, and the same year she co-produced an anthology to be used in schools.¹⁰¹ She founded the Woman's University Club. Furthermore, Marchalonis says she was a prolific writer,¹⁰² a claim substantiated by the entry on her in *Who's Who in America* (1912–1913), which designates her as both author and lecturer.¹⁰³ Her name is still present (author) in *Who Was Who* (1943), and the Library of Congress holds several of her books.

In view of the above, the following credo – which Brown stated in a women's club, expressing ideas similar to her exhortations in a book of advice for freshmen – is paradoxical:¹⁰⁴

Let our girls, in college and out, learn to be agreeable. A girl's education should, first of all, be directed to fitting her for the things of home. We talk of woman as if the only domestic relations were those of wife and mother. Let us not forget that she is also a granddaughter, a daughter, a sister, an aunt. I should like to see her made [*sic.*] her best in all these characters, before she undertakes public duties. The best organization in the world is the home. Whatever in the education of girls draws them away from that, is an injury of civilization.

Brown was obviously a highly regarded professional woman, enterprising and ambitious. Stanton's notes suggest that Brown was an impecunious student; she must therefore have worked hard for her position. In that struggle, college should have been of importance, from an intellectual as well as a

¹⁰⁰ Marchalonis, 14 and 79; Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), 125.

¹⁰¹ Appendix H in Annie Nathan Meyer, *Barnard Beginnings*, found on 23 January 2003 in <http://beatl.barnard.columbia.edu/cuhistory/archives/Rosenberg/appH.htm>. The anthology was mentioned in <http://www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/school/Backus,Truman.htm>, 23 January 2003.

¹⁰² Marchalonis, 14.

¹⁰³ *Who's Who in America*, ed. by Albert Nelson Marquis (Chicago: Marquis, 1912–13).

¹⁰⁴ The quotation is from 'Women's History', Chapter VIII: Woman Suffrage and Education http://womens-history.about.com/library/etext/bl_watr_ch07.htm, 23 January 2003. Brown's advice was published as *Talks to Freshman Girls* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914). It was favourably reviewed: one reader concluded that the book was concerned 'mainly with the acquisition of true culture and the methods of putting it to the highest use' (emphasis added), *The Independent*, 12 October 1914, 66. Brown had earlier emphasized the importance of girls' 'domestic relations' in her article 'How Shall We Educate Our Girls?', *The Outlook*, March 1896, 431–32.

social point of view. Not unexpectedly, *Two College Girls* shows how an institution away from home might be 'the best organization' in which girls could develop. As Marchalonis writes, the end of the narrative insists that educated women faced a variety of choices.¹⁰⁵ These facts appear to apply to someone other than the person who expressed the quoted views about woman's place and education.

The rare suggestiveness of *Two College Girls* was appreciated in a *New York Times* review of 1886, and *The Spectator* printed a long (one-and-a-half columns) and enthusiastic review of it; the experiment with American women's colleges was apparently exciting to read about in Britain. In *The Atlantic Monthly*, the reviewer said that it had been written with 'feminine delicacy'. However, *The Nation* printed scathingly critical remarks; strangely enough, the disappointed reader found 'nothing of growing and deepening maturity, nothing of the sense of the heights and depths of learning' in *Two College Girls*. (The review is unusually long, nevertheless, which points to a certain status on the part of Brown's novel.)¹⁰⁶

In her recent investigation of young girls' fiction just after 1900, Gwen A. Tarbox stresses the importance of Brown's college story from a viewpoint opposed to that of *The Nation*. *Two College Girls* changed the focus as regards girls' options in a more radical direction: from an emphasis on marriage and family to young women's intellectual and personal development in an almost male-free zone. Tarbox concludes that '[w]ith *Two College Girls*, Brown gave her readers a taste of a kind of life which most of them had never considered.'¹⁰⁷ Brown's book was obviously popular: *The National Union Catalog* mentions a fourteenth edition by 1893 and 'WorldCat' on the Internet refers to a 1914 volume.

Information about the other two writers is much harder to find. However, we do know that Caroline M. Fuller was a Smith graduate. Her obituary in the *Smith Alumnae Quarterly*, 1964, states that she was a poet, a novelist, and a playwright; the titles I have located appear to be aimed at juvenile readers. They were all published after *Across the Campus*, her first publication.¹⁰⁸ A Scribner advertisement for it in *Smith College Stories* contains favourable extracts of reviews printed in *The Outlook* and *Literature*. Fuller's novel sold well, and it was reprinted several times up to at least 1932. Scribner's archives are administered by Princeton University. I hold a copy of a letter sent to Fuller from that firm; dated

¹⁰⁵ Marchalonis, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Reviews: NYT, 22 March 1899, 3:2; 'An American Girton', *The Spectator*, 19 February 1887, 266-67; 'Recent Fiction: *Two College Girls*', *The Nation* 42, 29 April 1886, 364-65.

¹⁰⁷ Tarbox, 3.

¹⁰⁸ The information was supplied by Smith College Archivist Nanci A. Young in an e-mail, 14 February 2001.

1919, it mentions a play and a book for children written by her.¹⁰⁹

Compared with the titles of college stories written both before and after the turn of the century, Fuller's book is unusual. While the other titles merely focus on person/s and place – that is students, who are often named, being at college in general, or at one which is mentioned in the title or/and the text – the title phrase indicates movement: passage over a tangible area, or within the academic world. The complete title, *Across the Campus: A Story of College Life*, confirms that the writer wanted to depict the particular experiences in store for a girl who entered that specific environment. The central theme revolves around what Marion Talbot would later discuss: the establishment of moral power and social effectiveness among students whose conduct and self-interested actions impede the daily intercourse between college-girls and interfere with what was expected from an educated woman – 'fine democracy and social power'.¹¹⁰ Winning 'friends' and knowing what real 'friendship' means are important issues in Fuller's novel. These two words recur throughout the novel. Can two students remain close, although one of them proves capable of disloyal actions? In *Across the Campus* moral struggle takes precedence over intellectual endeavours and achievements, which are generally hinted at instead of being described in detail as in *Two College Girls*. Fuller seems to have shared Marion Talbot's view, articulated some ten years later, that 'surroundings, organization, discipline, and *atmosphere*' (emphasis added) were more crucial in a liberal education than 'definite instruction'.¹¹¹

Julia Augusta Schwartz, like Webster and Brown, graduated from Vassar. Between 1899 and 1918 she had four college volumes published. The novel about Elinor and her three student friends is the second. The one preceding it was a collection of separate 'studies', which Vassar alumnae read but were little pleased with as, using the Simpsons' phrase, it failed to bring out the 'real quality of life at Vassar'; the two succeeding volumes are definitely aimed at young readers.¹¹² *Elinor's College Career* was reviewed in *The Nation* – 'more really a college story and less a dwarf novel than usual' – and in *The New York Times*, in which it is recommended for those interested in college education. Schwartz continued to write or adapt stories for boys and girls well into the 1930s. She is mentioned in *Who's Who in America, 1912-1913*.

In Schwartz's novel, the protagonist's mother is a college graduate whose ambitious education of her daughter makes the latter rebel against the col-

¹⁰⁹ I am grateful for the kind assistance provided by Archivist Margaret M. Sherry at Princeton University.

¹¹⁰ Talbot, 1910/1978, 233.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹¹² Simpson, 63. The four college volumes are: *Vassar Studies* (which was, for instance, reviewed in NYT, 19 August 1899, 546:4), *Elinor's College Career* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1906), *Beatrice Leigh at College* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1907), and *When Jean and I Were Sophomores* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1918).

lege studies into which she feels forced. The main plot is woven around the ways in which that girl gradually develops into a character similar to the student paragon a friend describes as 'the ideal of intelligent womanliness': Elinor learns to appreciate intellectual endeavours, as well as characters whose conduct and appearance differ from her own.¹¹³

Among the other college-story writers, Josephine Dodge Daskam (Bacon) was a prolific and often-reviewed writer for another thirty years after *Smith College Stories*. That volume was reprinted by Books for Libraries Press in 1969; a reprint of *Vassar Stories* followed a year later. Both Daskam and the author of 'A Brave Girl', Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Ward), managed to combine marriage with a literary career. While women academics mostly appear to have produced juvenile fiction after their college stories, several of their male college writers wrote for a more varied readership afterwards; moreover, they had more titles printed. One may speculate that this had less to do with differences in literary quality than with women's finding it harder to become published writers in other genres.

Who read the college narratives? Primarily young readers, claimed one Frank C. Myers when discussing 'The [Male] College Story' in 1910, though he referred to a further group of readers for male college stories: 'the great legion of alumni' had expressed reactions to that kind of fiction.¹¹⁴ As several prefaces imply, the male college-story writers, in particular the early ones, aimed their college fiction at undergraduates and alumni, many of whom would belong to college/university faculties.

Novels set in a female environment apparently found a more diverse readership. Some were clearly aimed at juvenile readers, namely the series books and those titles which directly stated that they were intended 'for Girls', even for 'Young Girls'. As this book has shown, 'girl' applies to a female person who is unmarried; thus a 'college girl' does not mean a 'young girl'. Nevertheless, whenever a title-page specifies for whom a book was intended, 'girl' and 'boy' certainly indicate juvenile readers. Besides, if the titles of recently published stories are mentioned in short newspaper notices together with other books for children, this is a sign that they were intended for the same audience.¹¹⁵

When a book is reviewed on its own, however, there is reason to assume a wider readership. In Marchalonis' view, all college fiction apart from the series books 'was aimed at an adult audience'. She refers to century-old

¹¹³ Schwartz, 1906, 120.

¹¹⁴ Myers, 440.

¹¹⁵ See, for instance, Mrs Clarke Johnson, *Her College Days: A Story for Girls* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1897) and the cursory review, 'New Books for Girls', in *The Dial* 29, 1900, 506, in which Daskam's *Sister's Vocation, and Other Girls' Stories* is mentioned (NY: Scribner's, 1900).

diaries and letters confirming that stories about young people were read by grown-ups.¹¹⁶ The idea that family members other than the daughters would read these stories for entertainment, as well as for information about an exotic place, seems plausible. In contrast, Inness claims that readers were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, that is, belonging to the period before and during college. Inness also thinks it unlikely that more than a 'fraction of a percentage' of the readers were male, as they had so many tales written about their own institutions to choose from.¹¹⁷ In fact, however, critics at the time often recommended women's titles to young and old, male and female readers alike.¹¹⁸ The fact that publishers expected such wide-ranging readerships is seen in the advertisement for *Daddy-Long-Legs* which Century put in *Life*: 'Mothers and daughters, whether of the old school or the new, as well as some fathers and most sons, are recommended to read Jean Webster's ... *Daddy-Long-Legs*.' The clippings in Vassar's Special Collections testify to the great popularity among adults of Webster's three stories, particularly the one about Judy.¹¹⁹

While the age and sex of the readers of the earlier college stories are sometimes difficult to ascertain, it can safely be said that Jean Webster and Owen Johnson were read by male and female audiences of varying ages. Johnson's criticism of the liberal-arts curriculum and of the way in which student societies hindered democracy was debated at length in, for instance, *The New York Times*. It is a well-known fact that if a novel makes it into an ordinary newspaper article, that is the best advertisement for it, and Stover's experiences must have been familiar to others besides alumni and schoolboys.

In 1956, Alice Payne Hackett claimed that '[m]any of the titles [then] listed as juveniles were originally published as adult books, but changing taste [had] now definitely placed them in the category of juvenile reading'. She went on to maintain that juvenile fiction had 'a disconcerting habit of changing its audience', adding that *Daddy-Long-Legs* marked a 'noticeable trend' because it was written for adults even though the protagonist was rather young.¹²⁰ It is interesting to consider her views on the aspect of readers' age in connection with Webster's book, whose reader history diverges from Payne Hackett's pattern. One contemporary reviewer wrote that *Daddy-Long-Legs*

¹¹⁶ Marchalonis, 5.

¹¹⁷ Inness, 15.

¹¹⁸ In *The Bookman* 20, 1900, 326, for instance, the reviewer of *Smith College Stories* did not rule out male, and satisfied, readers. Similarly, the reviewer in *The Nation* referred to 'he' readers. *Wellesley Stories* was 'worthy of a reading outside of college circles', *NYT*, 2 March 1901, 132:2.

¹¹⁹ As has been mentioned, Woodrow Wilson enjoyed the play version. His fancy was, however, first caught by the novel, which newspaper readers are reminded of in an article of 1915: 'President's Favorite Play Comes to Heilig'.

¹²⁰ Hackett, 11, 63. and 121.

was 'in no sense a juvenile'.¹²¹ A month later, *The Bookman* printed its own comment on a letter from 'the very dignified house' which published Webster's stories, claiming to have received a similar message from Montgomery's publisher. In both cases, *The Bookman* was requested not to classify the novels under the heading 'juveniles', as was obviously being done.¹²² The journal was explicit as well as slightly condescending in its polite refusal to comply with the request, explaining that to do so would mean changing the reports it received and based its best-seller briefing on. A year later, however, the magazine was 'quite ready to concede that *Daddy-Long-Legs* should have appeared under the head of fiction', instead of being labelled juvenile. The forty to fifty booksellers who provided the material for the lists were advised to use 'greater care and heartier cooperation' in their compilation. In Marchalonis's view, Webster's story has of late been 'relegated to juvenile shelves because it lacks sex, violence, or a fragmented universe.'¹²³ As the letter in *The Bookman* shows, however, *Daddy-Long-Legs* had in fact been 'elevated' to the adult shelf in the past – at least for a period of time.¹²⁴

Susan Sutton Smith regards *Daddy-Long-Legs* as a 'perennial favorite with both adults and children'.¹²⁵ Discussing education in children's literature towards the end of the twentieth century, Gertrud Lehnert makes a relevant point as to why adult readers would enjoy the story, namely Webster's use of irony – a feature that would, she points out, be problematic for 'very young readers'.¹²⁶ In 1930, one May Lamberton Becker commended Jean Webster's fictional characters Judy, Sallie, and Patty and the stories about them in *The Saturday Review of Literature*:

[They] are real and representative; their look on life is American. Americans love them: the day Jean Webster met her death a dentist told me that his waiting-room ... was full of patients of the varied classes and conditions likely to gather there, when a workman, his eyes full of tears, came in with the news. It was, he said, as if everyone there had lost a personal friend.¹²⁷

Whoever read the stories, whatever college life was actually like at the time, these narratives taken altogether attempted to define a kind of higher education and the components of which it consists. As the writers had themselves

¹²¹ *The Continent*, Chicago, 7 November 1912.

¹²² *The Bookman*, December 1912, 346.

¹²³ Marchalonis, 62.

¹²⁴ Webster's books were published by Century (*Just Patty*, *Daddy-Long-Legs*) and Grosset & Dunlap (*When Patty Went to College*, *Dear Enemy*). Jane S. Smith claims that the latter firm also published series stories, that is narratives for a young readership, 173, note 1. As can be seen in my bibliography, there were quite a few publishers of this kind.

¹²⁵ Susan Sutton Smith, 345.

¹²⁶ Lehnert, 109–22 (115).

¹²⁷ In 'The Reader's Guide', *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 25 October 1930. (The Jean Webster Collection, box 25.11.)

been to college, their experiences must have guided them. Theirs was the choice to include and to exclude what components of college life they wanted in their fictionalized academic enterprises. For readers in general, with little or no insight into higher education for women, their accounts would create images to believe in. An earlier fantasy of institutionalized higher education for young women forms an undercurrent in those literary efforts.

A literary frame of reference

My fictional material dates back to 1847, when Alfred Tennyson's *The Princess* was published. Tennyson belonged to those canonical writers who were included in the English courses in American schools and undergraduates would hence be familiar with his work. *The Princess*, his long, dramatic poem about a women's university, conjures up an institution for intellectual education. The principal, lecturers, and students are all female, and so are the workers in the field. At the Seven Sisters before 1914, on the other hand, principals tended to be male, as did most of the academically trained teachers. That is also the case in the majority of women's college stories. It might be claimed, however, that Tennyson's female college was made possible by a man: the princess's father provided a summer palace for the experiment.

The image that the poet drew of Princess Ida's college resembles that of a convent in important respects: like novices, students have to make vows to cut ties with the world during their three-year-long education in the all-female institution. Nevertheless, Ida's suitor and his two friends, disguised as women, infiltrate the area. Their reaction to a lecture they attend testifies to the high intellectual standards of the princess's institution. Furthermore, as they pretend to be new students, they are informed of the aims of the university: to make participants develop out of the childlike state in which society and men expect woman to remain. An all-female environment is considered to be mandatory to achieve that goal: otherwise women would fall into line, obeying the demands prevailing in society; their interest would be diverted from serious intellectual work to making themselves attractive to men.

The Princess was frequently quoted in articles debating women's studies, as well as mentioned in stories.¹²⁸ It was referred to in many different ways, a circumstance which corroborates its status as a classic. For instance, a *Critic* writer found that in his poem Tennyson made fun of his 'new idea' in a 'spirit of patronizing gallantry'; by 1905, however, that 'idea' was thought to be

¹²⁸ See, for instance, Daskam, *Smith*, 166; Abbe Carter Goodloe, 'Was It Her Duty', *LHJ*, August 1898, 9–10 and September 1898, 8; Gertrude Fisher Scott, *Jean Cabot in Cap and Gown* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1914), 160.

'secure, even bold'.¹²⁹ In 1902, *The Ladies' Home Journal* printed photographs of college girls taking part in different activities, one of them representing sophomores 'giving a burlesque adaptation of Tennyson's "Princess"' (May, 27). They may have acted out the Gilbert burlesque of the poem of 1870, *The Princess*, or Gilbert and Sullivan's opera version, *Princess Ida* (1884).

Written decades before the first women's college opened in the USA, *The Princess* articulated many of the diverging attitudes to higher education for girls in late-nineteenth-century America. Unfortunately, Tennyson's 'medley' to a great extent lived on through one-sided quotations taken out of context. Usually they embody an unfavourable view of women's higher education, for instance an opinion expressed by the prince's companion: when copying men's study courses, women 'hunt old trails', never inventing anything new.¹³⁰ At times quoted phrases were not even from the poem itself, but from Gilbert's adaptation, like the one according to which women's colleges were the 'maddest folly going!' What could 'girls learn within its walls worth knowing?'¹³¹ The worn expressions were usually of the kind which strongly advocated that woman's and man's opposing natures be kept apart.

Tennyson's poem thus formed an undercurrent both in the general debate and in the college stories written in the period covered by this book. Two epithets attached to Alice Freeman form ironic illustrations: in veneration as well as in jest, Wellesley students nicknamed their respected young president 'The Princess', which embodies a positive reference to the fictional pioneer. When Freeman finally consented to marry in 1887, however, resigning from her exalted position in consequence, her husband elevated her to the rank of 'queen'.¹³² A married woman was thus automatically placed above any professional female from a hierarchical point of view.

The Princess contains many voices expressing a variety of attitudes to the new idea of higher education for women. No such academic institution existed for a female student in England in 1847. The poet merely presented a fantasy, which he had been considering for a long time; Tennyson's son said that 'the project of a Women's College was in my father's mind' for eight years before he published the poem.¹³³

Various critics claim that *The Princess* owes its literary reputation more to the lyrics which sometimes interrupt the narrative than to the 'dull' poem

¹²⁹ Harriet Monroe, 'Literary Women and the Higher Education', *The Critic* 46, April 1905, 313. See also Dr Lyman Abbott, 'The Advance of Women', *The World's Work* 8, July 1904, 5033–38 (5035).

¹³⁰ *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn (Longman Annotated English Poets, 1987), II: 368–69; all subsequent references to Tennyson's poetry are to this edition, cited in the text by line number.

¹³¹ W.S. Gilbert, 'Princess Ida' in *The Savoy Operas I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 313.

¹³² Margaret E. Taylor and Jean Glasscock, 'The Founders and the Early Presidents', *Wellesley College 1875–1975: A Century of Women*, ed. by Jean Glasscock (Wellesley College, 1975), 30.

¹³³ *The Poems of Tennyson*, p. 185

itself. In 1936, T. S. Eliot recoiled from what he regarded as a 'static poem' and 'the outmoded attitude towards the relations of the sexes, the exasperating views on the subjects of matrimony, celibacy, and female education' voiced in it.¹³⁴ Another view is that Tennyson's 'interest in the subject runs out before the poem does', an opinion also voiced in contemporary reviews. That obviously did not affect public interest; the poem sold out for decades.¹³⁵ The *NEB* dismisses *The Princess* as a 'singular anti-feminist fantasia' (11:635); but as matter of fact, the poem was regarded as a useful starting-point for discussing women and higher education a hundred years ago. By then American women's colleges were established institutions, and in 1906 the 'Middle States and Maryland' schoolgirl examinations included the following assignment: 'Discuss Tennyson as a storyteller, pointing out how far you think the interest of the Princess lies in the narrative.'¹³⁶ An Englishman in a short college story is pleased to see Tennyson's vague and poetical vision realized when he visits an American college.¹³⁷ Even the founders of Queen's College – the first for women in England – thought that Tennyson had thoroughly penetrated the pros and cons of female higher education. They turned to him for consultation when planning their own bold enterprise, recognizing that the poem illustrates the complexity of the question of women's higher education.¹³⁸ Echoes of Tennyson's pool of opinions vibrate in the college fiction I have studied, which is why it is discussed at some length here and referred to in analyses in the ensuing chapters.

In the framing narrative of *The Princess*, a young woman called Lilia, the daughter of the owner of the grand estate where the tale about Ida develops, wishes to build a college for women in which they might be taught what men had a chance to learn. Brushing serious studies aside, one of the college men in her company mockingly sighs for 'sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair', suggesting that a woman's studies must not change her appearance or her mentality.¹³⁹ That image of a female academic would be long-lasting. Lilia protests surprisingly mildly against the comment. Further on, however, Princess Ida devotes all her energy and authority to educating her disciples

¹³⁴ T.S. Eliot (1936), 'In Memoriam', *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson*, ed. by J. Killham (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 207–213 (209–10). The song lyrics are praised, for instance, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, 7th edn, 2 vols (NY: Norton, 2000), II, 1225 note 1.

¹³⁵ 'Alfred Tennyson' in *Dictionary of Literary Biography 32: Victorian Poets Before 1850*, ed. by William E. Fredeman and Ira B. Nadel (Detroit: Brucoli Clark Book, Gale Research, 1984), 262–82 (270–72).

¹³⁶ Mary C. Robinson, 'The Pupil and the Requirement', *School Review* 14, 1906, 587–93 (591). Linda L. Mather mentions the article in 'The Education of Women: Images from Popular Magazines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 105–06.

¹³⁷ Goodloe, 1898, 9.

¹³⁸ Alicia Constance Percival, *The English miss to-day & yesterday [sic]* (London: George G. Harrap, 1939), 148.

¹³⁹ Tennyson, Prologue: 142.

beyond the immaturity and innocence implied in that vision.

What is seldom mentioned in contemporary American discussions of the poem is that Princess Ida, confronted by seemingly indestructible boundaries regarding woman's conditions and place, fiercely argues for 'equal might and rights'.¹⁴⁰ She regards education as a necessary instrument in this struggle. A pioneer, she is aware of how much effort is needed to achieve the desired goal. In consequence, she has decided to deny herself marriage and family. Instead she vows to work for the education which must, she realizes, be on a par with the theoretical kind open to men to gain respect in the eyes of the world. Without it, she claims, women will remain

... dismissed in shame to live
 No wiser than their mothers, household stuff,
 Live chattels, mincers of each other's fame,
 Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
 The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks of Time,
 Whose brains are in their hands and in their heels,
 But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to thrum,
 To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to scour,
 For ever slaves at home and fools abroad.¹⁴¹

These are strong words and concrete images, but unlike those pertaining to 'womanly' aspects in *The Princess*, they are seldom repeated in factual or fictional texts.

The poem contains a striking comparison between the desired form for achievement of knowledge, theoretical as well as technical, and its opposite. On the one hand Tennyson outlined both the substantial educational content of Princess Ida's college and the exciting technical experiments on the part of the Mechanics' Institute that are referred to in the opening lines of the poem. On the other, the 'unworthier' male undergraduates in the frame story describe the frolics that seem to take up most of the time in men's colleges.¹⁴² The story these men fabricate about Ida's institution contains men characters utterly devoid of knowledge about higher education. *The Princess* contains no indication that either king – Princess Ida's father and her suitor's – knows anything about it. Neither kings nor princes, the suitor and Princess Ida's brothers, seem to have been taught anything beyond fighting – that is to say, using brute force instead of forceful knowledge and reflection. In the poem, Ida's intellectual endeavours are not so much the issue for her suitor's father as the fearsome idea of women managing on their own in college, with no male supervision or inspection. What bothers, even infuriates, several of the male characters is the novelty of women being independently at the helm,

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, IV: 56.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, IV: 492–500.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, Prologue: 110–17.

allowing men no insight or control. That issue would in fact prove crucial in American discussions about women's colleges: 'What goes on in there?' is an implicit, at times suspicious, query in non-fictional articles as well as in college stories.

The Princess was written at a time of anxiety about the threat to the *status quo* which women's higher education, and their ensuing use of their training, implied. The plot of *The Princess* offered some consolation to the worriers: Princess Ida has to give up her enterprise, woman's willingness to nurture men conquering her devotion to intellectual endeavours. Nonetheless, *The Princess* provides surprisingly potent arguments in favour of female education, not least by showing that the strongest argument against it is men's fear of its consequences for their own position and domestic comforts.

The Princess ends on a note of reconciliation. The teller of the tale prescribes patience; the world – and female education – must be given time and guidance. He makes his main characters accept that man and woman should reach equilibrium, even in marriage. However, they must retain their distinctiveness; their particular and gendered traits should not be harmed.¹⁴³ His vision (and credo) is for women to grow mentally – which I read as an acceptance of academic education for women – and for men to grow morally. Some of Tennyson's male characters actually seem more immature, even 'childlike', than their female counterparts. In college stories about men, that is not an uncommon trait: students steal turkeys for fun, pour syrup down fellow students' backs, and hurl fried eggs at one another.¹⁴⁴

The ambivalence underlying post-Tennyson debates on female intellectual endeavours culminates in his much-quoted line 'not like to like, but like in difference'. Woman's advanced studies should not make her 'lose the childlike in the larger mind'.¹⁴⁵ How was 'like in difference' to be interpreted and applied? Should women really retain some juvenile characteristics? Tennyson's wishful thinking borders on a desire to have it both ways: allowing women their education but insisting that it must not change them, nor alter the position of men in relation to women. In 1906 Daisy Lee Worthington of Vassar College echoed Tennyson's vision: 'Side by side, shoulder to shoulder, our college men and women must work together for the general betterment of humanity'.¹⁴⁶ Readers would, of course, interpret that desire according to their own inclinations, though Worthington clearly

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, Conclusion: 72–79 and VII: 264–268.

¹⁴⁴ The examples are from Wood, 1894, and Williams, 1895. Daskam included a pair of twins, characterized by some rowdy behaviour, 94–95.

¹⁴⁵ Tennyson, VII: 262 and 268.

¹⁴⁶ Daisy Lee Worthington, 'Higher Education for Women', *Educational Review* 32, November 1906, 405–14 (413).

did not have childlike, sweet, and golden-haired females in mind.

When the Civil War came to an end, a small number of American girl students moved into institutions similar to the one outlined in *The Princess*. They settled in, and within a few decades the trickle of young women graduates had grown to a flood. As was mentioned above, *Two College Girls* was the first representative of the new girls'-college-story genre.¹⁴⁷ On the basis of my study of the genre over several decades, I would argue that women's stories typically grapple with the ambitions and anxieties that pulsate in Tennyson's poem.

College fiction, which was suddenly fashionable for a few decades, offered its readers models and values. It seems reasonable to assume that the people who wrote college stories set in a female environment were aware of the general attitudes pertaining to the role of woman. At the same time many of them envisaged, and were educated for, change. Steering between Scylla and Charybdis, on the one hand the authors of college fiction drew attention to the usefulness of the educated woman and her capacities for other occupations than home and family, while on the other they had to demonstrate her adaptability to and understanding of the societal *status quo*.

I will now move on to the texts in which higher education is fictionalized, at times popularized, concentrating on the ways in which the issues surveyed in chapter one were dealt with by college-graduate writers. While I focus on factors which can be seen to form part of higher education, those factors inevitably point to the duality mentioned in chapter one. Both aspects will be elucidated. Beginning with the aspect of femininity, I attempt to outline how, especially in the four books by Brown, Fuller, Schwartz, and Webster, the image of the women's college and higher education for women was introduced to the reading public at large, showing how Tennyson's ideas – similar to those expressed in the contemporary debate – reverberate in female college fiction.

¹⁴⁷ Champney's *Three Vassar Girls* series are travel-guide books rather than college stories.

3

Ideas about femininity in college fiction

[College Professor Burton:]

'I have decided, from my own observation, that the college life tends to increase womanliness in women rather than to diminish it. Anything that teaches a girl to distinguish between the realities and artificialities of life cannot fail to make her understand what, for her, must be the greatest reality of all! I think that the college girl is always more womanly at the end of her four years' course than she was at the beginning – for the simple reason that there is more of her to be a woman with.'

'Would you care to marry one of them?' asked Dr. Comstock, thoughtfully.

Fuller, *Across the Campus*, 269.

In various ways, women's college stories are concerned with the dichotomy inherent in contemporaneous higher education for girls. On the one hand, we learn about the intellectual training aimed at promoting individual thought and at matching the rigorous standards of men's colleges. On the other, the tales also show us a regulating environment, primarily focused on aspects of femininity. It is reasonable to assume that this latter aspect of women's education was the more problematic issue for women college story writers; characters frequently either embrace or ridicule different notions of femininity. The sheer space devoted to such issues shows that female writers of college stories were aware of, and often concerned about, the discrepancy between ideal conditions for academic women and what they had themselves experienced in that respect. The characters in their books wish to be judged on the basis of their intellectual and mental capacities as well as on that of their feminine appearance, deploring or acknowledging, quite simply, that the way they look is crucial for women. The narratives consequently indicate ways in which the girls' appearance, deportment, and health are supervised; feminine characteristics are emphasized and safeguarded in the enclosed sphere of the college. Students themselves are important agents in that process. Introducing the various settings and protagonists found in the four books that form the mainstay of my discussion, this chapter shows how those ingredients in higher education for women are dealt with in college stories,

particularly in these four novels. It also looks at the attempts made by characters and narrators to question rigorous notions of proper feminine attitudes and capabilities.

‘College’ as a setting

Princess Ida’s university in Tennyson’s *The Princess* is located in a palace cut off from the temptations of the world, as it were, and from men. Similarly, girl undergraduates in college stories live as well as study within the boundaries of their institution, which is generally placed at some distance from the nearest community. However, while Tennyson’s students have vowed to remain in the palace for the duration of their full education, fictional college students leave the premises during vacations. Helen Dawes Brown and Jean Webster in particular used that device to show their readers how characters’ social and cultural backgrounds vary and how an individual student’s attitude and aptitude may be explained by her earlier experiences. In the novels by Caroline Macomber Fuller and Julia Augusta Schwartz, pre-college existence and vacations are passed over. Information about parents and family is provided when family members visit the institution and when the girls refer to relations at home.

In the first college narrative, Brown’s *Two College Girls* of 1886, we learn about the protagonists’ families and their very different socioeconomic backgrounds: a hill district and a busy industrial town respectively. In the first place the horse sets the time, whereas a protagonist must run to catch an overcrowded street-car in the second. Apart from the diversions that their visits home involve, students spend their time in the educational environment. They are awed in seminar and lecture rooms, worried in the infirmary, and gregarious when assembling in the protagonists’ rooms to discuss events of the day or talk about their teachers. Similarly, teachers assess the undergraduates in private. At times, a student visits a faculty member; and seniors are allowed the occasional excursion. By means of these devices, Brown’s story unveils some of ‘that mystery – the college life of girls’, which was how the general public perceived women’s higher education at the time.¹

A decade later college appears to be demystified, and apprehensions about it allayed, at least to a certain extent. The narrator in one of Abbe Carter Goodloe’s stories in *College Girls* claims that women’s colleges are generally thought to be institutions in which girls are shut up for ten months at

¹ Helen Dawes Brown, *Two College Girls* (Boston: Ticknor, 1886), 247. The view that female colleges are a mystery is held by fellow passengers during the senior excursion, in the course of which the students are under the teachers’ supervision.

a time; therefore, it is said, they remain happily ignorant of the 'struggle for life' and the woes of the world. The college setting is vague, and men are important: several of the narratives focus on romances and marriage. Characters in Goodloe's book are on visiting terms with students from male colleges, and while the girls are chaperoned no particular strictness is shown. In subsequent stories, published 1899 to 1901, characters usually remain on campus, which is, however, extended. The landscape surrounding 'Harland College' in Fuller's *Across the Campus*, for instance, is as important to the characters as the imagined buildings on campus themselves; girls roam among majestic trees, attempting to solve personal, philosophical, or religious questions. Extracurricular activities assume importance: a choir performance, for instance, unites students and people from the neighbourhood. In addition, family members provide new perspectives.²

In Schwartz's *Vassar Studies*, the surrounding areas offer counterweights to the intellectual education at college: characters pick flowers in springtime and skate on the lake in winter. Attitudes to college and studies constitute the main theme of the book. Fierce and competitive basketball matches appear from *Across the Campus* onwards; Grace Margaret Gallaher's *Vassar Stories* emphasizes the hard work needed to produce a college magazine, and one tale in *Smith College Stories* illustrates the view that college fosters strong individuals with no loss of feminine attractions. The institution in the latter volume is not primarily seen as the perfect place to acquire academic knowledge; more importantly, a spoilt girl will learn that 'she is n't [*sic*] the only clever girl; [college will teach her] that other girls can read and talk and play the guitar and wear nice clothes and order silly young men about.'³ While the narratives devote some space to spare-time activities, they deal with students of all kinds: sportive, funny, isolated, bitter, clever, to mention a few college-girl characteristics. *Wellesley Stories* affords insights into invigorating but time-consuming activities within a poetry club and a Shakespeare society. *Bryn Mawr Stories* has more to say about life after college than about the college setting itself. As in *College Girls* and *Smith College Stories*, for instance, the outside world tempts a character who leaves prematurely to marry.⁴ Faculty authority and college rules are questioned in Schwartz's *Elinor's College Career*, a book which – like Fuller's *Across the Campus* – suggests ways in which a poor girl could manage at college.

² Abbe Carter Goodloe, *College Girls* (NY: Scribner's, 1895), 227, 3, and 279; Caroline Macomber Fuller, *Across the Campus* (NY: Scribner's, 1899).

³ Julia Augusta Schwartz, *Vassar Studies* (NY: G.P. Putnam's, 1899); Grace Margaret Gallaher, *Vassar Stories* (NY: Richard G. Badger, 1900); Josephine Dodge Daskam, *Smith College Stories* (NY: Scribner's, 1900), 'The Education of Elizabeth', 123–47, and 'A Few Diversions', 205–43.

⁴ Grace Louise Cook, *Wellesley Stories* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1901); *Bryn Mawr Stories*, ed. by Margaretta Morris and Louise Buffum Congdon (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1901).

Jean Webster moved her heroine from one institution to a very different one. Nevertheless, the two locations in *Daddy-Long-Legs* have one trait in common – they are confined. The only environments that the protagonist is familiar with before college are the orphanage, visited by trustees once a month, and the village high school, which she attends whenever she is not needed ‘at home’. The college she spends four years in is also a closed area into which it is far from easy for visitors to gain admittance, especially if they are male. As Judy explains, that is ‘hard enough’ where fathers and grandfathers are concerned, ‘but uncles are a step worse; and as for brothers and cousins, they are next to impossible.’ When attending a dance at Princeton, Judy hastens to allay any misgivings by telling her ‘Daddy’ that they had leave of absence from college and her friend’s mother to chaperone them.⁵ In her first year, Webster’s character feels ‘like an escaped convict’ whenever she leaves the campus.⁶ However, there is a major difference between the orphanage in *Daddy-Long-Legs* and a higher education institution: ideas at the John Grier Home ‘were bounded by the four sides of the iron fence’, whereas the college environment offers plentiful opportunities for open-ended reflections and discussions. Unlike her college-fiction predecessors, Webster’s heroine spends periods of time in diverse environments, away from college: on a farm, at a seaside resort, in an upper-class home in New York, in a boisterous small-town family, and at a summer camp.⁷

In *The Princess*, the surrounding society is considered (and shown) to be a threat to women’s higher education; Princess Ida’s vision about education as a means to elevate women crumples before the onslaught of male force and men’s need of care. In college stories, external threats are less tangible and drastic, but their effects on studious young women are similar: changes for the worse in a family’s economy force undergraduates to leave prematurely or to remain at college as hard-working, self-supporting students.⁸ In *Two*

⁵ Jean Webster, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (Century, 1912; repr. Puffin Classics, 1995), 76–77 and 139.

⁶ See, too, Jean Webster’s boarding-school story *Just Patty* (NY: Century 1911; repr. NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 187: when the protagonist romps out of bounds without permission, she feels both free and naughty – an ‘intoxicating’ combination usually ascribed to boys. Similarly, in Webster’s *When Patty Went to College* (NY: Century, Grosset & Dunlap, 1903), 262, Patty feels the ‘deliciously guilty thrill of a truant little boy’ when she cuts chapel for a day outdoors.

⁷ Webster, 1912/1995, 76–77, 86, 34, and 111.

⁸ Sherrie A. Inness comments on the ways in which ‘family finances could suffer severe fluctuations’ in the period: *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women’s College Fiction, 1895-1910* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 111–26 (119). Sudden changes in the family economy affect a student in, for instance, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Ward), ‘A Brave Girl’, *Wide-Awake*, 1884, vol. 18: 27–31, 105–11, 169–74, 237–41, 297–303, 361–65; vol. 19: 27–31, 92–96, 156–62.; L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (Boston: Page, 1908; repr. Philadelphia: Courage, 1997), ch. 37, 268–69; Fuller, ch. 11, 145–61; Schwartz, 1899, ‘The Genius’, 60–80; Daskam, ‘A Family Affair’ in *Smith*, 151–201, and ‘A College Girl’ in *Sister’s Vocation and Other Girls’ Stories* (NY: Scribner’s, 1900), 31–49; Gallaher, ‘The Clan’, 165–217; Jessie M. Anderson (Chase), ‘Three Freshmen: Ruth, Fran, and Nathalie’, *St. Nicholas*, January–May 1895, 191–95, 326–332, 392–96, 504–07, 592–96; ch. XII, 507; Goodloe, 1895, ‘Miss Rose’, 215–26.

College Girls, insecure industrial America constitutes a brutal foil to the safety of college and a corresponding contrast occurs in *Across the Campus*.⁹ But Webster's protagonist is the only college-story heroine who actually experiences various settings outside the college environment. They are all beneficial to her, supplementing her education and helping her develop into a reflecting individual.

As this chronological overview shows, the setting in women's college fiction is depicted with increasing diversity from 1886 to 1912. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the academic standards of women's colleges were no longer vigorously contested; therefore there was no need to dwell on the formal details of women's higher education. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that graduate writers had experienced how essential activities outside classrooms were to the development of college students. In the four novels I have studied closely, a gradual opening of new vistas is apparent.

Even though the individual college novels differ in many respects, they present the college environment as instrumental in the growing all-round maturity of the girls. Chronicling that process, the books offer comments on those ideas about women in general, and about their femininity in particular, that were discussed in chapter one.

Student characters in the four novels: an introduction

An essential part in the lives of residential college students at the time was learning to live with people whose only common bond was that they had all chosen the same form of higher education. The college novels I analyse leave the reader in no doubt that this kind of life brings great benefits. Before college, a family circle is the only other society most of the fictional girls know – a society to whose individual rules for intercourse and companionship they are accustomed from birth. College novels show how a student who wants to thrive in a residential institution must avoid being either a narrow-minded, self-absorbed 'grind' or a flighty, irresponsible 'butterfly'.¹⁰ Typically, charac-

⁹ See Edna's visit to a lumberyard in Brown, 1886, where people die in accidents in a place described as 'perilous, cruel, savage, horrid, prostrate', 262–66. See, too, the reference in Fuller's novel to a mining-camp in the west where 'the primitive thrives and grows', 417–18, and Goodloe, 1895, 'The Genius of Bowlder Bluff', 245–68, in which an 'uncultivated ... rough and even uncouth' father is contrasted to a refined college senior.

¹⁰ A comment like the following contains an opinion related to attitudes in society at large, which is voiced in college stories: 'You know we have threshed this all out before so many times, and raged to each other about the quarter of the population who take us, without looking, for mannish boarding-school girls, as empty-headed as the women of ten centuries ago, but more silly because we pretend to be what we are not; and about the other quarter, who look upon us as grinds and blue-stockings, star-gazers impossible and undesirable to touch with a pole of any length!' *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 1901, 263.

ter extremes are thrown together when the story begins. Either authorities have allotted them to shared living quarters, or they happen to live in the same house off campus, as the freshmen do in *Across the Campus*. The girls quickly learn the unwritten college codes regarding morals, deportment, and appearance thanks to the peer pressure which naturally ensues.

The protagonists in *Two College Girls* set the pattern for the novels which were to follow: one is a 'grind' and the other a 'butterfly'. To borrow Marion Talbot's expressions, the former has 'no aptitude for making friends', being 'awkward and ill at ease', while the latter has participated too much in 'the social affairs'.¹¹ When teachers discuss the girls, anticipating the changes that will take place in the course of the college years, they express similar views: the grind's lack of ease is deplored as much as the butterfly's nonchalant attitude to intellectual work.¹² In addition, the former represents those student characters – common in college fiction – whose financial means are limited and, when their fathers die, insufficient, whereas the latter is typical of another classic category in that she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.

One of the protagonists, Edna Eliza Howe, is defined as being a serious and old-fashioned young woman, named after two deceased aunts. She is unaccustomed to girls of her own age and more secure in a restricted circle of familiar grown-ups, among whom she dares to speak her mind. On entering college she does not know how to behave in a group of strangers: she has an aversion to small talk, and a lack of interest in students of other turns of mind coexists with a powerful desire for learning. Paradoxically, when she was living in her small-world family circle she acquired many of the traits that society at large deplored in a woman, traits which were usually attributed to girls who were actually at, or who had been to, college. When she graduates, though, she has developed social skills. In that process she is trained not least by her room-mate, whose brother proposes to her during senior Commencement and thereby seals the happy ending.

Edna is a diligent student who will neither squander what little money she possesses nor waste precious hours on having 'a good time'. A few short stories contain characters who share some of her characteristics, but have less of her luck.¹³ However, a larger number of main college-story girl characters resemble Edna's foil, Rosamund Mills, named after a heroine in a popular novel. Her surname indicates her origin; her grandfather started out in a log cabin, whereas her father is a self-made businessman running a factory. She

¹¹ Marion Talbot, *The Education of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910; repr. NY: Dabor Social Science Publications, 1978), 197–98.

¹² Brown, 1886, 107–10.

¹³ See, for instance, Gallaher, 'A Sense of Obligation', 105–21 and 'The Clan', 165–217; Daskam, 'A Family Affair' in *Smith*, 151–201.

claims that she came to college solely to enjoy herself. Financially independent, well-schooled in interior decorating, dressing, and deportment, Rosamund is a social success. In this respect, she is the complete opposite to Edna; but while a college education satisfies Edna's intellectual cravings, it becomes a turning-point for Rosamund in her moral training and sets her up for an independent future. Her scholarly and professional appetite has been whetted by educational and social experiences, while her close relationship with Edna has strengthened her character. Furthermore, she vows to marry only a man who would agree that a woman is capable of working out her own destiny, a view which is suggestive of Princess Ida's unwillingness to 'yield herself' to someone who 'scorned to help [women's] equal rights'.¹⁴ Implicitly, the text tells us of the extent to which a college graduate's background is decisive for her future. Rosamund is delineated as having benefited from her self-confidence, developed in an environment in which a college education is taken for granted. More than in any other college novel, seriousness – even asceticism – is thus initially confronted with self-assured flippancy. The main plot in *Two College Girls* evolves around the ways in which the characters of the two girls improve when, partly as a result of their living together, they remedy their dissimilar character deficiencies.

In many ways, Christine in Fuller's *Across the Campus* resembles Rosamund. Like Brown's protagonist, she is a spoilt daughter and an indifferent student. The way Christine is introduced and is initially seen to behave in the new environment makes it evident that she has been allowed much freedom at home; but unlike Rosamund, she is not used to being polite, helpful, and interested unless she immediately respects or admires a new acquaintance. She is often seen to be bored. At college she can count on the company of an old, reliable friend from home, who is prepared to do the tedious work for both of them and repair any mischief caused by her gifted friend. Initially, therefore, the haughty young woman feels no need of support from other students. Consequently, she shows little patience with girls whom she considers inferior, whereas a ladylike and seemingly independent student wins Christine's admiration. Fuller's story emphasizes that girl students must adapt to, and as a result benefit from, the social skills traditionally associated with the feminine characteristics that Marion Talbot was later to hold up as necessary in a successful college education for women: co-operation and mutual understanding, sympathy, and thoughtfulness.¹⁵ Christine's attitude soon renders her a reputation for being 'an inexcusable, unbearable

¹⁴ *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn (Longman Annotated English Poets, 1987), VII: 217–18.

¹⁵ See chapter one, 'Between two stools'.

little snob'; she is then treated accordingly. Humiliated, Christine is made to realize that at college she must no longer snub every student around her, unless she accepts that by doing so she condemns herself to remaining an external observer and therefore unable to enjoy what she covets – the college atmosphere.¹⁶ In due course, she learns to judge people on the basis of their character rather than their appearance. Similarly, the narrator points out from time to time that elegance is not a substantial characteristic; indeed, it often conceals rottenness at the core.¹⁷

Even though financial distress may haunt some students, most college characters are in much the same position as Rosamund and Christine in that their families are financially stable and they have been prepared for college. Often they are not particularly interested in the academic part of their education but manage because of their early schooling and/or because they are talented. Self-assured and attractive, they are at the centre of other college girls' attention. This is particularly the case with Webster's Patty and Sallie, Schwartz's Elinor, and several characters in *Smith College Stories*.

Fuller's other two protagonists, however, possess characteristics which do not recur as manifestly in one single person in other college stories. The first one, Clare, is a 'sweet child with brown eyes' – a typical good-girl character, representing the 'childlike' woman whom men are accused of coveting in *The Princess*.¹⁸ Described as a moral paragon, Clare's function in the story is to clarify complex and troubled situations for herself, for her friends, and for the reader. A positive Christian, incapable of deceit, she is always prepared either to take the blame or to turn the other cheek. Her friends seek her out when they are in distress and need religious advice. In that way Clare is also an important catalyst character, actually supplying guidance of the kind that President Raymond provided in the early days of Vassar.¹⁹

Physically delicate, Clare was spared and emotionally spoilt at home. While the selfish Christine came to college with a self-assurance that must be tempered, Clare feels her own insignificance acutely in spite of her protected background. At college she must learn to grapple with people who do not always consider her feelings as she has been used to; hence she acquires a kind of mental strength that she did not possess before. While her cherished wish is to gain one true bosom-friend at college, she reaps her laurels in the field of music because that is where she possesses both talent and dedication.

¹⁶ Fuller, 41 and 44.

¹⁷ Schwartz makes use of the same image. When, however, Elinor throws away her flowers because she claims to observe 'horrid little crawly bugs' at the centre of them, that incident illustrates how her insincere attitude wears her down; Julia Augusta Schwartz, *Elinor's College Career* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1906), 190.

¹⁸ Fuller, 9; Tennyson, Prologue: 125, and I: 135.

¹⁹ President Raymond described activities of this kind in his handwritten first report, 1866 – to be found in Special Collections, Vassar College Library.

Though Clare remains humble and vulnerable, she is not clingingly dependent on anyone. In fact, Fuller made her adopt principles which Marion Talbot was to apply to members of the faculty: Clare is 'patient and persistent' and often on her guard 'against feeling resentment at instances of discourtesy', not to mention when she is faced with spiteful and arrogant conduct.²⁰ Notwithstanding her success in that field, she describes herself as unimportant to the end of the book. The protagonists in the ensuing girls' college series books, for instance Betty Wales and Molly Brown, share many of Clare's characteristics. Unlike series students, however, Clare is a 'round' character who can, for instance, become quite angry and whose wish for a true friend is never fulfilled.

Fuller's third main character is complex from a psychological point of view. Ardis Hathaway's name stands out among all the common ones given to other students in college stories. Not only is her surname that of Shakespeare's wife with whom she also shares her first-name initial; the name 'Ardis' is out of the ordinary, too, and so is her personality: the elusive character is opaque and increasingly difficult for the students to understand, epitomized by her eyes which 'often withdraw into their own shadows'. She seems courageous and frank, humorous and adorable, elegant and independent. Fuller thus invested her with characteristics which would normally secure social success. However, the reader realizes long before the other students in the novel that Ardis is 'rotten' behind her bland mask. Her actions proving her lack of empathy, Ardis claims to live by a selfish rule which is anything but womanly: 'getting all the pleasure out of life that life can give'. She accepts that her actions have painful consequences for her fellow-beings, but does not understand how deeply other students may be hurt in the process, claiming that she is merely curious to know the result.

Even though Ardis is somewhat older than the other girls and appears ladylike and self-reliant, the narrator suggests that she has never matured from a childish preoccupation with herself. While Christine and Clare benefit from doubting themselves and their abilities, Ardis's actions show that a person who nourishes feelings of self-hate, and therefore distrusts herself, is incapable of believing in the good will of other people or of acting towards them in a disinterested way. Having to choose between people and ideals, she would opt for the latter. On the few occasions when she is aware of her spiteful actions, that awareness constitutes a punishment in itself.²¹

One scene illustrates a basic theme in *Across the Campus*: the moral obligation of a senior because of the great influence she can exert on younger stu-

²⁰ Talbot, 1910/1978, 202.

²¹ Fuller, 19, 52, 161, and 264.

dents. Ardis is verbally assailed by a minor character who reminds Ardis that she once put the first cigarette in the younger girl's mouth when they were in preparatory education together. The admiring girl had then learnt to imitate Ardis's blameworthy attitudes and behaviour. At college this girl is known to drink and smoke, and her actions show that she is unreliable.²² In her turn, she has a following of admiring under-class girls who obviously cannot perceive her lack of intrinsic worth. Ardis's deplorable sway is contrasted with the good influence of Clare, who wins Ardis's prep-school friend over in a controversy thanks to Clare's decent and just treatment of the spiteful group of students to which the younger girl belongs.

Ardis is an exception among college-girl characters; her shameful actions combined with her complex nature make her character unique. Ruthless and egocentric, she bears some resemblance to Tennyson's Lady Blanche.²³ However, Fuller's novel also contains several hints that help the reader to understand the causes and effects of Ardis's behaviour.²⁴ Neither morally nor socially does she change or develop during her four college years; at most, a desirable development is implied in the last few pages.

In the interplay between the three characters, neither Ardis nor Christine acquires Clare's emotional and social attainments and hence lack her ability to resolve personal controversies. Ardis cannot find the means to humiliate herself by apologizing. Christine's 'rigid purity of honor' prevents her from taking the first step. A lack of womanly assets, in both cases originating in the insufficient feminine guidance provided by their homes, consequently entails distress for the two persons involved.²⁵ For reasons outlined above, Fuller's novel seems to be the most didactic among the narratives on which this study concentrates.

Among the characters in Schwartz's *Elinor's College Career*, there is little of the complexity with which Fuller invested Ardis. The four girls in Schwartz's novel might be perceived as symbolizing different, isolated traits of an ideal college student seen from aesthetic, social, artistic/intellectual, and ethical points of view. Elinor Offitt is the important aesthetic character and a 'grand-daughter' of the college; her mother belonged to the first college generation. Her family environment imparted rigid values to the teenager, and she has little understanding for those at college who do not share her aesthetic and deportment-oriented criteria. She lacks flexibility; the inevitable social inter-

²² Girl students smoking and drinking are rarely mentioned in other college stories.

²³ See, for instance, Tennyson, IV: 273–339.

²⁴ A similar, male, character, whom the protagonist first admires and later rejects, appears in George Henry Tripp, *Student-life at Harvard* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks, 1876), 390. Here, though, the reader is not encouraged to look for causes explaining that student's behaviour.

²⁵ Fuller, 412.

course when there is no 'attraction of like to like in character and breeding' is a strain on her, especially since her meticulous social training from home does not allow her feelings to show.²⁶ Like Christine in *Across the Campus*, she jealously guards her prestige, resenting criticism against herself. During the major part of her education she finds much to complain about at college; when she is shown to improve in feminine qualities, however, she accepts regulations and the state of things at her venerated college. The plot weaves its way towards two events which result in a change of character when the junior year is almost over. The subtext in Schwartz's novel evokes the old idea of the womanly woman, Elinor functioning as an intrinsically ambivalent focus. Of the four girls she is the most feminine. She adapts to and finally comes to love college, its structure, and even the education it offers, but her ideal is to be 'womanly', not academically oriented. The term 'womanly' is never explicitly defined in the novel, but as Elinor is much admired for her appearance, deportment, and posture, it clearly encompasses those qualities.

The three girls with whom Elinor is allotted to room on her arrival are different, from one another as well as from Elinor. Myra Dickinson is considered to be an impulsive and amiable chatterbox. At college she is a success among the students. Like Elinor she is young, only sixteen.²⁷ She has derived what knowledge she has of the place to which she is going from reading a huge number of college stories. However, she does not have the benefit of her friend's good pre-academic schooling. When almost a graduate, she shows her capacity for self-irony, hoping that her 'present ideal condition' will stay with her: 'health, wealth, beauty, and brains'. Interestingly, the text abounds in instances of Myra's possessing both relevant knowledge and astounding insights when talking with friends. She fits the description that another student gives of a college girl: 'College should teach them poise, balance, common-sense.' While her girlish pranks in her first year almost put an end to her academic career, she often proves to be a friend indeed. Acting impulsively to help friends in need, she evinces the awareness of and concern for human beings which Talbot advocated, and which Elinor lacks on her arrival. When another character dismisses Myra as being a mere 'rattlepate', that view is thus at odds with the one that emerges during a close reading of the text.²⁸

²⁶ Schwartz, 1906, 14.

²⁷ One of Dr Clarke's contentions, in *Sex in Education or A Fair Chance for Girls* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1873), was that girls entered college in general and Vassar in particular when they were too young. The case he brought forward to prove his point about the dangers of higher education for young women was refuted by the results of inquiries related in Julia Ward Howe, ed., *Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's "Sex in Education"* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874): an average freshman class at Vassar contained very few students under seventeen. That Schwartz made two out of four protagonists so young on their arrival in a 1906 story is therefore intriguing.

²⁸ Schwartz, 1906, 322, 150, and 19.

Thinking about the third character, Lydia Howard, before knowing who she is, Elinor uses the following adjectives to describe her: Lydia is 'stately', 'condescending', 'conventionally correct', 'patronizing', and 'resolute'. That early assessment of Lydia holds water. She is usually indisputably in command, as when she asks her friends to behave 'as if [they] were at home in civilized society'. They later find out that while she professes to embrace democratic and progressive ideals, at heart she is a conservative pillar of society.²⁹

Elinor is an academically reluctant student; Myra maintains that she has come to college because she expects it to be immense fun; and Lydia's interest was kindled by her wish, as she claims, to 'escape for a while the mercenary standards of the social circle at home'.³⁰ Unlike the other three, the fourth student's early life was sorely lacking both economically and emotionally, and she aspires to a professional future.

For years on end, Ruth Allee has had to take care of herself. Her freshman year is made possible because she saved and scraped while working as a teacher. Ruth hopes to learn to be a writer. Lydia believes her to be a genius because of her appearance, which is rendered in stereotypical terms by narrator and students alike: she is considered to be shabby, she has 'pixie' features in constant, emotional change, and when she appears for the first time her arms are full of dusty and crumpled wild flowers. The epithet 'genius' stays with her: she is both uncommonly unpredictable and relentlessly studious. Ruth breaks many hidden rules at college, confirming the stereotyped view of an exceptional talent: she is usually late for any appointment, wanders off alone, shows 'unconventional ecstasy', is 'queer' and 'erratic', and jumps on slippery stones 'like a witch'.³¹ Her appearance and behaviour offend Elinor in particular, even more so when Ruth develops a crush on her. Elinor's reaction, however, emphasizes her own rigidity more than Ruth's eccentricity.³²

Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* starts her college career on a much more insecure footing than most other college characters. Webster's earlier protagonist Patty (*When Patty Went to College*) is well prepared academically and skilled in ladylike deportment; Judy's early schooling took place according to the orphanage matron's whim, whereas her social upbringing was primarily aimed at making her work hard and obey her superiors. Patty grew up in a financially stable family, in which her academic education was taken for

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11, 17, 18, and 116.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23, 52, 34, and 209.

³² In her earlier collection (1899, 'The Genius', 60–80), Schwartz included a monologue in which a superficial butterfly discloses her egoism by describing her roommate, who is similar to Ruth.

granted. Like other girls in the same situation, she does not reflect on her advantageous situation of being a college student.³³ Unlike Patty, however, Judy realizes that academic education is her real chance in life. Without it she would have to support herself doing monotonous and badly paid work. In this respect she is in the same predicament as Ruth in *Elinor's College Career*; like that character, moreover, Judy rooms with two girls who are used to comfortable living. Jean Webster strategically chose to place those two in distinct social classes, although Julia Pendleton's and Sallie McBride's economic circumstances are perceived as being quite similar. Julia's ancestors arrived from England long ago, and her family belongs to the American 'aristocracy'. Orphaned Judy knows nothing about her own origin or family. Compensating for her loss, she makes ironic remarks about Julia's boasted lineage, seeing it as originating from both royalty and apes.³⁴ Sallie's father comes across as a self-made man; he owns a manufacturing company. Neither of the two girls is reported to have met with any visible objection to their college education.

To facilitate a smooth start, Webster provided Judy with a protective scaffolding (clothes and a monthly allowance) to make her blend in with the other college girls in an environment where a change of dress was required at dinner and in chapel. Consequently, Judy does not have to face the hardship of, for instance, Ruth in *Elinor's College Career*. Schwartz did not supply the reader with Ruth's point of view, nor does the narrator elaborate on her feelings. Webster's Judy, however, poignantly describes how 'poor-box' dresses and schoolmates' 'charitable' awareness of her background marred her high-school period.³⁵

Clearly, then, Jean Webster broke with conventions prevalent in the earlier college stories. Contrary to her three predecessors Brown, Schwartz, and Fuller, who employed fictional characters as corrective agents, Webster does not present Judy as registering any substantial influence from her two fellow students. Moreover, even though it is true that Schwartz's Lydia initially expresses a political will in her insistence on actual democracy for college girls, and that Elinor is seen to react against the narrow-minded treatment of women students, those forceful attitudes disappear as the girls adapt to restricting college rules through the influence of their close friends. In opposition, Judy develops an independent mind in relation to her benefactor as

³³ In this respect she resembles Rosamund in Brown, 1886, Christine in Fuller, and Elinor and Myra in Schwartz, 1906.

³⁴ Webster, 1912/1995, 37.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 and 26. Jean Webster will have been aware of the hardships which a working college girl faced: 'It takes indomitable grit to earn one's way through college' concluded Professor Orlande F. Lewis, basing his view on answers from no less than 60 colleges to a questionnaire on the issue of self-supporting students; see 'The Self-supporting Student in American Colleges', *The North Atlantic Review* 179, November 1904, 18–30 (26).

well as to college; furthermore, she repeatedly and earnestly reflects on woman's position in society. Increasingly, Judy does not consent to be a 'vasal' – Ida's term in *The Princess* – who has to obey incomprehensible decisions.³⁶ Webster's college story therefore possesses more facets than other narratives in this genre, showing how college may encourage a young woman to develop general maturity rather than to acquire specifically gender-marked characteristics. In Judy, Webster combined intellectual capabilities and personal determination with feminine attractiveness and human appeal.

Heart – head: a dichotomy

Tennyson's outspoken king contemplates the differences between men and women in terms of the dichotomy of 'head' – 'heart', seen as metaphors distinguishing women's character and propensities from men's. The female protagonist of *The Princess* softens and becomes more emotional when her intellectual enterprise comes under attack. Eventually, Princess Ida feels that her 'novel heart' has become 'molten' in her breast. A child opens a well of emotions in her; she is filled with gratitude towards her suitor when he rescues her from possible drowning, and with pity for him when he is wounded in the battle which turns her university into a hospital. The poem presents this development towards 'womanliness' as a laudable thing.³⁷

Similarly, when the 'heart' becomes the guiding force in college stories its supremacy is usually welcomed by narrators and characters, Webster's being, again, exceptions. Gertrud Lehnert writes that the 'prevailing standard for several centuries' demanded that women should use their intelligence (their 'heads' so to speak) as discreetly as possible: 'If talent and ability were recognized in a young girl, they were seen as troublesome and embarrassing ... something more to be denied than pursued.'³⁸ The idea that a girl should avoid using her intellectual capabilities is commonly presented in a mildly ironical way: a mother in *Bryn Mawr Stories*, for instance, who does not favour the refinement of a college girl's intellect, let alone that of her daughter, feels that 'a little genius is all very well, but a great deal is so conspicuous'.³⁹ Abbe Carter Goodloe referred to a similar mindset: an aunt

³⁶ Tennyson, IV: 127–30.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, V: 439 – 'Man with the head and woman with the heart'; VI: 103.

³⁸ Gertrud Lehnert, 'The Training of the Shrew: The Socialization and Education of Young Women in Children's Literature', *Poetics Today* 13, 1992:1, 109–22 (110–11). Referring to Enid Blyton's boarding-school stories she states that they are pervaded by the notion that the offered education aimed not at raising scholars – 'learnedness is only a welcome by-product' – but producing women with a heart (112). As will be seen, that idea is a salient feature in several college stories.

³⁹ *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 210. The protagonist's aspirations toward a career is 'indelicate'; her mother wants her to 'come out' and then marry.

writes in a letter about the 'severe trial' she is facing, having to entertain an 'independent' niece, a graduate who has even studied 'mathematical astronomy' in Oxford. The older woman has not met the young relative for many years, but is sure she knows 'what kind of a girl' to expect. The outcome of higher education is unfavourably compared with the accomplishments gained by the girl's cousins; however, the aunt's opinion is clearly a component in the delineation of a pompous and shallow character.⁴⁰

At times, a woman's 'heart' is made manifest when she cries. For instance, the narrator in *Two College Girls* states that a protagonist's father appreciates his wife's tendency to cry at decisive moments. Such expressions confirm the prevailing view regarding men's and women's different spheres: his spouse's tears provided him with 'at once a delicious sense of feminine superiority and an equally soothing sense of masculine superiority'. While that businessman's daily experiences are different from those of an intellectual college professor – another male character in Brown's novel – the two men are in broad agreement when it comes to appreciating feminine sensibility. 'A clear head' is the professor's best praise to a student, according to the narrator, and the expression also sums up his opinion of the protagonist in Brown's novel. Still, it is the particular experience of her 'heart', illustrated by her eyes 'brimming with joyful tears' while enjoying the scenery during a senior excursion, that makes him take an optimistic view of her future.⁴¹ In the first case, men's attitude to women's tears is smiled at by the narrator, while the college daughter is ironical about her mother's tendency to cry when she is happy. However, the second episode makes it clear that a college girl's 'head' must be supported by her 'heart', if she is to gain complete acceptance: the professor who holds that opinion is a reliable character, much admired and respected by his students.

The opposing characteristics serve as important structural features, particularly in Fuller's story but also in Schwartz's. Of the three main characters in *Across the Campus*, Clare represents the 'heart'. The other two protagonists lean towards the 'head', as is apparent not least in their philosophical discussions, which are described at length. These discussions, in which Ardis assumes a dominant role, illustrate the dangers of a woman's attempt to use abstract logic, in particular if she allows no influence from her heart. Ardis's scheming is successful almost to the very end, paradoxically because friends as well as faculty members are directed more by their emotions than by their

⁴⁰ Goodloe, 1895, 'La Belle Hélène', 39–66. In that specific collection, deportment and appearance are more salient features than 'heart', or sensitive emotions. There are few hints of what Tennyson's princess called the 'soft and milky rabble of womankind' from which Ida hoped that education would liberate female students: Tennyson, VI: 290.

⁴¹ Brown, 1886, 166, 241, and 251–52.

intellect in responding to her actions. Whereas Christine's gradual move towards gentleness is shown to be beneficial, her 'heart' does not win completely over her moral and logical judgement. In that she differs from Clare, who primarily sees to the needs of others. Again, however, Christine's refusal to do as Clare and staff-members do – forgive and forget Ardis's deceitfulness – is what brings about the first signs of change in the Ardis character. This is an interesting component in the system of values set up in *Across the Campus*, indicating that the balancing of heart and head is by no means an uncomplicated matter.

Schwartz's Elinor has to come to terms with the seemingly contrary claims of 'head' and 'heart'. She begins her 'career' as someone deficient in compassion and empathy; indeed, on one occasion the narrator comments that her heart has been transformed into some 'hard, unripe little organ'. However, in the company of her college friends she learns not to hide her emotions. As a graduating senior, she is compared with her alumna mother in whom intellect is clearly stronger than feeling; students then regard the daughter with more admiration. Elinor's development is obviously a result of her having allowed warmth and empathy into her character. Earlier, another friend interprets a student-composed poem as referring to the 'eternal conflict between the claims of head and heart', wondering whether 'a woman [shall have to] sacrifice the perfection of personality to the perpetuation of the race'. Towards the end that student feels certain that a combination of marriage and professional activity is possible, whereas the fourth girl in the student quartet disagrees: in her opinion, a woman has to choose one of the options only.⁴² However, the issue of what happens after college is not problematized in the novel; Schwartz neither offers a marriage proposal nor any definite plans for the future.

One of the stories in Goodloe's collection focuses on the head-heart dichotomy and, in particular, its implications for a graduate's future. An unmarried, childless woman scholar and a beautiful graduate meet at college. The visiting alumna is deemed to be unintelligent by the professor, while the narrator states that she is actually intelligent, explaining that her insights are not of a scholarly kind but 'the result of experience'. The professor's scientifically challenging life is unfavourably compared to that of the young graduate, who married a man she loved and leads a financially and intellectually impoverished but emotionally rich life; she has experienced moments of extreme happiness and deep sorrow. Taking stock of the scholar's environment, she finds it intellectually satisfying but lacking a soft wo-

⁴² Schwartz, 1906, 36, 27, and 327–28. Similarly, Goodloe, 1895, included a teacher comment, to the effect that brains and beauty rarely go together: 'As Told by Her', 67–146 (75).

manly touch, as a result of which the atmosphere is one of 'profound learning quite oppressive'. During the conversation between the two, the woman professor realizes that she has chosen the wrong vocation. Her way of life, reflected in the exterior of her person and her home, is renounced on the visitor's departure, just as in *The Princess* 'all Ida's falser self slipt from her like a robe/ And left her woman, lovelier in her mood'. The older woman does not of course change visibly, but she decides on the spur of the moment to leave college and all her 'barren' occupations. The plot is clearly predicated on the conflicting forces in the life of an academic woman: the warming influence of a woman's heart which will enable her to lead an emotionally full and gratifying life versus the pull of the intellect which, once yielded to, makes for a life of barren learning.⁴³

However, Jean Webster's three books about college-educated women show how head and heart can be fruitfully combined. Claiming to have heard too many sermons admonishing the girls to neglect 'reason and science' and rely on their innate propensity – 'feeling' – instead, Patty is more apt to use her wit than her empathic qualities. For instance, she fools a visiting, confused Englishman and increases freshmen's anxiety before examinations. Realizing later that help is really necessary, she provides it.⁴⁴ Similarly, Webster's other two main college-girl protagonists balance feminine emotion and masculine logic, and their practical and unsentimental actions often concern people in need. Sallie McBride in *Dear Enemy* discovers the excitement of remaining in the professional 'field' while also procuring her own 'hearth', a feat which Tennyson's bellicose king claims to be impossible.⁴⁵ Unlike the majority of college heroines in stories by other writers, Judy is not seen to abide by society's expectations and act the tender, pliable woman whose main goal should be to have her heart in what was agreed to be the right place. For instance, she says she dislikes Julia Pendleton from the start and does not waver in that opinion during the years they share living-quarters, which constitutes a divergence from the other novels. Nor is she punished for her ungenerous attitude. Furthermore, she has no patience with lack of intellectual vigour: a freshman in her Latin class is curtly described as being 'dough-faced, deadly, unintermittently stupid' and the girls Judy tutors and the men she meets in the junior summer are depicted in the same terms. No womanly, generous understanding of the kind that Marion Talbot and others hoped college would foster is allowed to temper her censorious attitude.

⁴³ Tennyson, VII: 146–47; Goodloe, 1895, 'As Told by Her', 72–79. A speaker at the senior dinner provides a piece of advice regarded as valuable for women in particular: they ought to learn to live, as opposed to live to learn.

⁴⁴ Webster, 1903, 267–68, 276, 41–56, 135–46, 149–76.

⁴⁵ Tennyson, V: 437.

Nevertheless, Judy's social skills are highly satisfactory: she associates with the other students in a friendly way and does not record one single conflict during her college years. Unlike several other college characters, she does not efface herself to please or help other persons.⁴⁶

The notion that altruistically oriented emotion should guide women's actions, so emphatically articulated in Tennyson's poem, consequently reverberates in American college fiction too. Admittedly, it is often undercut by touches of humour, even irony. Nevertheless, it is at college and not at home that characters like Edna, Christine, and Elinor are seen to gain a thoroughly praiseworthy feminine disposition for empathy.

Womanly characteristics

The spark that sets the imagination going in *The Princess's* is an old myth about a woman fighter. A young woman, Lilia, then expresses her dream of access to higher education, and her brother's condescending response spurs her into arguing for her ideas. In Lilia's view, a female university would prove that women were at least as 'quick' as men; if women gained access to academic thought and knowledge, they could consequently no longer be regarded as the innocent and helpless beings men preferred to see. The male students who invent the story Lilia asked for include men's views of that development; and when an element of love is added, it leads to the closure of that imaginary intellectual institution.

The following characteristics and skills, seen to be innate in women, are ingredients in Tennyson's story: innocence is implied by the white dresses worn by the anonymous mass of students and by Princess Ida on the occasion when she falls into the water; subordination begins to replace the princess's strong-mindedness when men invade the all-female territory and Ida must accept that men fight for her university; women's 'hearts' conquer Ida's vision – 'sweet order [reigns] again' – when female intellectual studies are exchanged for the nurturing care of the wounded, skills which are implied to be innate to women: according to Ida, 'coarse mankind ill nurses' whereas female hands provide 'tender ministries'. Furthermore, a child is instrumental in emphasizing how academic efforts have made Princess Ida barren: her associate's little child stimulates motherly feelings which – in the eyes of the narrator and the prince – help turn the protagonist into a perfect woman.⁴⁷ Tennyson thus addressed three of the four traits which the nineteenth century appreciated in a 'true' woman: purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.

⁴⁶ Webster, 1912/1995: see, for instance, 49 and 149.

⁴⁷ Tennyson, innocence II: 448; support V; feminine skills VI: 52; 'sweet order' VII: 1–5; barrenness VI: 184.

The one characteristic missing in *The Princess* is the assumed female propensity towards religious devotion, instruction, and guidance. In college fiction, chapel often comes across as part of the routine; it is seldom presented as a place of true worship. Because chapel is compulsory, Sundays are unpopular days in *Vassar Stories*.⁴⁸ Students are scheduled to go, it is important to sit in the correct places, and there are certain permitted 'cuts'.⁴⁹ A student in *Wellesley Stories* is described by her friends as embracing 'prejudiced and almost sentimental religious' feeling; their deprecatory assessment, however, signals their own callous characters.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, thorough knowledge of the Bible is actually connected to poor intellect in some short-story collections.

The four novels handle religion in dissimilar ways. A religious propensity is a natural ingredient in Edna's family in *Two College Girls*: Brown's novel opens when family members who have been to church are invited to hear of her adventurous plans. Occasionally, Edna is revealed to be a believer, though a timid one. Furthermore, her friend Rosamund has a religious experience beside a dying student.⁵¹ Three of the four novels mention students voluntarily discussing Bible lectures and attentively listening to sermons and prayers.⁵² The only story in which religion is repeatedly shown to be important is *Across the Campus*; Clare is guided and strengthened by her faith and her friends revere her accordingly, acknowledging her superiority over them because of her piety. This college story is strongly didactic on matters pertaining to accepted feminine characteristics. A close reading, however, discloses a parallel discussion about gender characteristics in the course of which the traditional borderline between male and female areas is questioned.

Religious routines at the orphanage in which Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* grew up failed to evoke any spiritual ardour, and the protagonist takes a prosaic view of religious matters. Spending a Christmas holiday with her friend's family she feels uplifted, as no grace is said at the table: she has 'offered' too many 'obligatory thanks' at the orphanage. Furthermore, when a woman whom senior Judy's benefactor, 'Daddy-long-legs', has helped financially wants to thank 'the good Lord', she is brusquely reminded that her prayers had nothing to do with the cheque in her hands. Chapel in this novel is not only part of the ordinary schedule; sermons are usually described as being platitudinous and long-winded, resulting in more rebel-

⁴⁸ Gallaher, 'At the First Game', 228–29.

⁴⁹ Going to chapel is a moral duty more than a religious experience in Webster, 1903, 259–80.

⁵⁰ Cook, 'Submerged', 146.

⁵¹ Brown, 1886, 1, 250, and 217–18.

⁵² Goodloe, 1895, 'Miss Rose', 213–24; Cook, 'The Trial of Professor Lamont', 143–86; Schwartz, 1906, 270.

lions than pious responses – and the girls are either ‘kept’ in there for too long, or receive frustrating exhortations.⁵³

In the New Testament, children represent the innocent souls assured of admission to heaven.⁵⁴ The word ‘child’, however, carries a variety of implications in the frame story of Tennyson’s *The Princess* as well as in college stories. On the one hand, the epithet may be belittling and usually is when applied to women. When she is ‘wild with sport’, the sister who sets Tennyson’s fantasy in motion is described as being ‘half child, half woman’. Lilia reacts strongly when her brother, as a consequence, pats her condescendingly – a gesture she apparently feels is appropriate for a lovely but naive little girl. Lilia responds by arguing that women will remain children because men want them to, instead of allowing them to take on responsibilities which would make it possible for women to mature. When students in *Two College Girls* and *Across the Campus* do not like their teachers to address them individually as ‘my dear child’ or ‘silly little girl’, their reaction implies that they feel the same way. In the latter novel, ‘childlike’ is a derogatory qualification of one protagonist. Characters in *Elinor’s College Career* are likened to ‘irresponsible’ children. Additionally, one protagonist observes that college girls are treated like children: they are granted freedom of decision as long as their decisions coincide with what staff members consider suitable for them.⁵⁵

In Tennyson’s poem, however, the narrator and male characters appreciate signs of honesty and innocence resembling Biblical ideas of childlike purity. The sight of stern Lady Blanche’s daughter Melissa epitomizes womanly virtues for the younger brother of Princess Ida’s confidante Lady Psyche. The young woman is a daughter and a woman, clad in a college gown though not referred to as a student; her unflawed if immature character is manifested by her burning cheeks when she is unable to lie about the male invaders. Florian considers her to be a pretty ‘maiden, true and pure’, valuing, in particular, that blushing.⁵⁶ Similarly, ‘child’ represents excellent qualities in Fuller’s Clare. Where blushing is concerned, emotionally reformed Elinor in Schwartz’s novel deems it to be a very positive sign when she discovers that dignified Lydia’s cheeks actually redden.⁵⁷

Innocence coupled with a wish for women to remain ignorant of men’s vices is an interesting theme in a short story which appeared in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* of 1898. An Englishman visits an American college and a stu-

⁵³ Webster, 1912, 75 and 162.

⁵⁴ Matthew 18:3.

⁵⁵ Tennyson, Prologue: 100–101; Brown, 1886, 122; Fuller, 172; Schwartz, 1906, 118 and 140.

⁵⁶ Tennyson, III: 82–84, 29–30.

⁵⁷ Schwartz, 1906, 317.

dent there whom he knows slightly. It is apparent that the two are attracted to each other. However, the young woman shoulders a moral obligation to warn the older man against consenting to a marriage between her brother and his sister owing to her sibling's reckless character. We never learn of any specific misbehaviour, only that the sister recalls his transgressions with abhorrence. The fact that she knows what he has done and dares to talk about it confounds the man; though he will take action to stop the marriage plans, he no longer esteems the college student. It is apparent that the man regards the woman as marred by her awareness of vice and by her 'manly' determination to inform him.⁵⁸ No other story is similarly focused on women's being expected to be timid and innocent; indeed, women's college fiction rarely points to any awareness of worldly vices. Both men's and women's college stories contain moral messages regarding proper behaviour, but they differ as to what actions are shown to be reprehensible. Parents who hesitate to send their sons to college are in fact seen to have more substantial reasons for their anxiety than those who consider female higher education with some trepidation. Not only do most male stories tell of students initiated into smoking, drinking, card-playing, cheating, and heavy betting, all of which result in financial juggling;⁵⁹ a sexual involvement of an undesirable nature is also indicated at times – on one occasion, for instance, a character explains that 'a man *has* to sow his wild oats'.⁶⁰ In George Henry Tripp's *Student-life at Harvard*, vices of that kind are summed up as being the 'great world's wickedness'.

No such activities occur in women's college stories. In that sense, innocence prevails in them, even though it is seldom the main theme. On one occasion in *Smith College Stories*, a brilliant student is shown to undermine college authority bent on safeguarding that innocence. When seniors ask for permission to perform *Twelfth Night*, their request is turned down because of the existence in the play of the drunkard, Sir Toby Belch. The young woman evades the ban by writing and staging a parody of the play.⁶¹ Such devious means may have played a part in the gradual and inevitable growth of the democratic student movement. They are not common in fiction, though. In Adams' story based on a freshman's letters to her 'Daddy Babbo', for instance, the student speculates about the ban on 'real trousers' in a play, blaming it on the 'microbe of maidenly deco-

⁵⁸ Goodloe, 1898, August 9–10, September 8.

⁵⁹ On the few occasions when cheating is mentioned in women's fiction, girls involved in it suffer pangs of intense shame. See, for instance, Daskam, *Sister's*, 'Her Father's Daughter', 191–195, and Gallaher, 'Her Position', 67–102.

⁶⁰ The quotations are from Tripp, 24, and John Seymour Wood, *College Days: or Harry's Career at Yale* (NY: Outing, 1894), 153–54. See, too, the section on 'Men's College Stories' in chapter two.

⁶¹ Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Family Affair', 188.

rum'. She does not devise any means of undermining that ban, however.⁶²

Any encounters with men are respectful and devoid of sexual implications. At times, members of the other sex are treated with mild indulgence, in a manner similar to the princess's treatment of the prince's friend in Tennyson's poem when she declares that his language proves him still to be a child.⁶³ Furthermore, male characters who associate with the girl students are on the same social level as they. As was pointed out above, *Across the Campus* contains two student extremes: Clare and Ardis. The former is the most innocent of all college girls I have studied. She appears incapable of harbouring a single malevolent thought, let alone performing an immoral action. Likewise extreme, Ardis is capable of morally despicable behaviour to an extent which is not found in other women's stories: to readers and other fictional characters alike, she is gradually disclosed as being bent on her own satisfaction, devoid of any empathetic understanding when her deceptive actions are hurtful for students, even those presented as her close friends. At times, though, she acts in accordance with general moral views, as when she refrains from inviting a man whom Clare considers dishonourable. Though some stories tell about characters who accept marriage proposals, fictional students generally share Clare's view that men are uninteresting as far as college girls are concerned. In *When Patty Went to College*, the protagonist visualizes with dread the prospects after college, when 'there would be men.' And 'some day she would probably be marrying one of them and then all *would* be over'. Patty is a clever and worldly student, but when contemplating that aspect of her future she appears as innocent and inexperienced as Fuller's Clare.⁶⁴

One of the four students in *Elinor's College Career* has male acquaintances at home, who sneer 'over the mild lemonade fun that girls had together'; students gliding down banisters, for instance, is said to be a newspaper cliché. At college, she learns that the 'innocent' lemonade fun is not considered to be mild at all; even after forty years, staff members keep worrying about what reputation a girls' college might have in the public eye to the point where the student editors of the college magazine are forbidden to accept a full-page advertisement for bubble gum. The consequences of her ignorance – the college girl is almost expelled for a minor offence – may be viewed as a warning for future students. The way she confesses immediately is, however, a moral signpost for an attentive reader.⁶⁵

⁶² H. B. Adams, 'Letters from a Wellesley Girl, *The New England Magazine*, 1908, vol. 37: 32–36: 161–66, 360–65, 433–36; vol. 38: 82–87 (37: 365).

⁶³ Tennyson, II: 44. See, for instance, Webster, 1903; Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Few Diversions', 205; Goodloe, 1895, 'An Aquarelle', 19–35, 165–85; Gallaher, 'At the First Game', 225; *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'In Maytime', 75–96..

⁶⁴ Webster, 1903, 265.

⁶⁵ Schwartz, 1906, 80, 301, and 78–85.

Schwartz's novel stands out among the others because it includes critical comments on cherished feminine characteristics, not least on ideas of innocence and humility, and on the way they are considered to be fostered at college. Elinor and Lydia, as well as Christine in Fuller's story, are indeed seen to conform to them; like Princess Ida, they lose much of their exaggerated pride. Nevertheless, before her senior year the main protagonist Elinor is even more rebellious than her 'lemonade' friend above, whom she accuses of being 'hopelessly feminine' because the other student uses her personal experiences as arguments. Complaining about the 'narrow' atmosphere at college, Elinor dreams of the chances boys have of getting out in the world and finding air to breathe. Towards the end, conversely, she is furious when overhearing some juniors accuse college of being a 'stifling, smothering, deadening' environment, and who regard college girls as dangerously feminine – too humble and 'namby-pamby'.⁶⁶ Although Elinor is by that time a reformed character, loving what she formerly looked upon as a repressive milieu, Schwartz thus made a point of emphasizing that her critical views were in fact shared by more students. Evidently, however, Schwartz could not be completely outspoken about that censorious attitude, as she delegated it to minor characters in the novel.

The 'feminine' traits which Schwartz's juniors disparaged were commonly hailed as glorifying a woman who would characteristically look to the needs of others before satisfying her own. College stories abound in events in which students apply that rule of subordination. Sacrifices are made for the benefit of other students, and the 'donor' is adamant that her act shall not be known. Such actions signify improvements in character and personality. Thus, for instance, seemingly happy-go-lucky Rosamund in *Two College Girls* decides to pay Edna's college fees anonymously, when the latter's father has died. Similarly, Edna helps a competitor win the valedictory – a talented student with whom Edna has secretly competed over the years, and who is temporarily handicapped by poor eyesight. The two girls perform good deeds without either making themselves known or needing praise for their actions. For Edna, in particular, her act completes her favourable transformation at college, according to the narrator: 'The littlenesses of character, that she had labored to beat out, vanished into one moment of greatness'.⁶⁷

Christine in *Across the Campus* experiences more than one such 'moment of greatness'. She steals over and decorates a friend's barren room with her most cherished items, leaving her own place less comfortable. Furthermore, she voluntarily steps back for a friend in a college election and later

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 212, 224, 267, and 323–24.

⁶⁷ Brown, 1886, 239.

renounces the part she coveted in a performance in favour of an unlucky fellow student, a sacrifice which makes another girl kiss her. Christine admits to enjoying this mark of affection, even though as a freshman she dismissed such female acts of appreciation as being forms of 'abominable sentimentality'. She is rewarded by a flood of impressive ideas and expressions which gushes forth within her, thus being able to write the Ivy Orator speech she later delivers and is hailed for in front of faculty, students, and spectators. Christine is seen to mature as a woman by means of self-distrust, as well as by her altruistic deeds. When a freshman she had high hopes of winning distinction at college. One after the other, those hopes are lost to her. Gradually learning to accept her disappointments, she continues to work steadily. In consequence, the humility and tenacity she acquires are honoured when she is unanimously elected Ivy Orator.⁶⁸

Much of the tension in Fuller's story derives from the different courses of action that Christine and Ardis choose and from their dissimilar relationships to moral insight and its consequences. Ardis dismisses all moral consideration as potential influences on her preferred lifestyle, stating that her decisions are based on philosophy and not on emotions. Nevertheless, her most shameful actions are revealed as being retaliations for incidents in which she feels that her delicate pride was slighted. Thus she also proves her intellectual superficiality.⁶⁹

The female trait of self-effacement is questioned in *Elinor's College Career*. The first time it occurs it concerns Lydia. When her conscience strikes her because she actually enjoys picking flowers for the daisy chain in the sunshine, Lydia contemplates moving inside to help out indoors in a dark, musty room as a kind of submissive duty. Hearing this, a friend notices a new expression of 'sweetness' in the formerly strong-willed student. Lydia's proposal comes across as excessive self-denial, whereas Ruth's reaction to it implies satisfaction: sacrifice becomes a woman. On another occasion, Ruth shares Lydia's vague discomfort at not being duty-bound, claiming that college is a selfish place where a girl only sees to her own wishes. Spurred on partly by a lecture on mission work among prisoners, but even more by being cold-shouldered by Elinor, Ruth speaks about becoming a trained nurse. Ruth has shown no propensity towards practical medical treatment – rather the reverse – whereas Lydia's suggestion leans towards self-punish-

⁶⁸ Fuller, 18, 151–53, 158–61, 365–90, 412.

⁶⁹ See, for instance, Fuller, 102–19, in which the character's complexity is also shown: Ardis manages deviously to have Christine black-balled. Afterwards she acts in a strange way. Singing in church later that day, Ardis gradually gives vent to despair, blaming God for her doings, feeling 'all helpless, in a great unhelping world'. On her return, she has one of her serious talks with Clare about whether a philosophy of friendship might allow for mean actions.

ment rather than towards effective work. A more light-hearted note is struck when Elinor explains how elegantly Myra and she manage to be noble girls, showing 'disinterested virtue and unselfishness' simply by making up each other's beds. The joke acts as an effective background when Elinor demonstrates her character development by offering to take on Ruth's mail-round because she notices her friend's restless yearning to get away into the garden and up on the hills. This distribution of letters brings Elinor's emotional transformation to an end.⁷⁰ In contrast to the previous implicit criticism of a tendency towards self-victimization, Elinor's offer has beneficial aspects and is a simple and practical act of friendship.

The dichotomy of womanly subordination and the strong-mindedness associated with college girls by an uneasy general public comes out clearly in *Bryn Mawr Stories*: a mother is against the whole concept of a girls' college because she imagines that the college atmosphere contains 'social depravity and advanced ideas'. Her opinion is one of many in fiction that anticipate the undesirable change which a college girl would undergo during her years in education. On the day of entrance exams, Brown makes mothers discuss the pros and cons of allowing their daughters to taste four years of freedom from home. One of them shudders when she thinks of welcoming home again a strong-minded woman. Nevertheless, she yields to her husband's trust in college.⁷¹

A corresponding idea is illustrated in the *Bryn Mawr* collection: a rejected suitor recalls comparable rumours about college girls, contemplating them against his actual experiences of one. Musing on the reasons why friends have tried to stop his courting a 'bryn mawrtyr', he confesses that talking with his college girl is interesting and challenging while he cannot bear the chatter of ordinary girls. Still, he has been fed a view similar to that of the mother referred to above, to the effect that college girls will take to platforms and make their voices heard, and this has made him convinced that college girls' strange ideas will ruin them with men. Apprehensions of that kind are based on the belief that woman's true sphere is incompatible with the strong wills – Princess Ida's 'iron will' – they develop at college.⁷² Mrs Lynde in *Anne of Green Gables* is an outspoken advocate of this view.⁷³

⁷⁰ Schwartz, 1906, 189–90 and 233.

⁷¹ *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'Catherine's Career', 211. Brown, 1886, 34. College students are aware of the implications of the term in Schwartz, 1906; as one claims that a character in a college performance has acted in a 'strong-minded' way, other students add how public opinion looked with distrust on 'strong-minded' women academics, 232.

⁷² Tennyson, VI: 102; See, for instance, the following views on women's college education and students taking part in it: 'chock full of notions' in *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'Catherine' Career', 207; 'managing' in Josephine Dodge Daskam, *Her Fiancé: Four Stories of College Life* (1904; repr. NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 'The Point of View', 150; 'a violent reaction from nature to art' in Goodloe, 1895, 'Revenge', 171; 'moral decline ... self-assured' in Montgomery, 1915/1995, 50; 'get the upper hand' in Brown, 1886, 19.

⁷³ Montgomery, 1908/1997, 266.

Physical education, in particular the popular basketball game, was a subject which caused concern for apparent reasons. Girls who were seen as delicate creatures should be protected and not risk injuries in mannish occupations like competitive games in which strong minds and well-trained bodies are compulsory components, whereas unobtrusiveness is no asset. In college stories, activities of this kind bear witness to the ways in which girls grow mentally and physically forceful and bold, the opposite of being self-effacing and subordinate. When basketball was fairly new in women's colleges,⁷⁴ the game instigated Patty's career as a correspondent from college – the way Jean Webster started her own, too. A sprained ankle in the heat of the game at college was written up as a serious injury by a daily paper. Illustrated by a photo of the girl 'clothed in a masculine-looking sweater', the article caused violent reactions, for instance from alumnae who deplored the introduction of 'such brutal games' at their *alma mater*.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, basketball games are recurrent features in women's stories – a late instance is Judy's proud account of her strategy and the bruises she receives in her basketball team⁷⁶ – and form a natural component in the fictional girls' lives, expressing a determination to fight and win at all costs. Sherrie A. Inness rightly regards the inclusion of class games in women's fiction as a 'threat to the established social order'; they portray 'unladylike physical prowess and interest in winning' as desirable traits and include moments when yelling and shouting cannot be restricted.⁷⁷ Even within college itself those activities were considered unwomanly, and they are certainly not manifestations of self-effacement or subordination. In one short story, an instructor, attempting to adapt the students' behaviour at a match to a mode of conduct more suitable for them, cautions the spectators that they must not scream or howl – an exhortation which proves completely ineffectual. When the game starts, no individual voices can be heard in the ensuing uproar; and the girls are not reprimanded afterwards.⁷⁸

In *Daddy-Long-Legs* the protagonist evinces no subordination. In the course of her education, her determination and independence are constantly increasing. Even before her college education has influenced her, Judy strikes an individual and in fact flippant note. She is usually saved by her humour, as when she was writing her essay in high school; nevertheless, Judy shows plain disrespect for Mrs Lippett when describing how she was told how to

⁷⁴ Inness, 74, provides data on basketball in women's colleges.

⁷⁵ Webster, 1903, 185.

⁷⁶ Webster, 1912/1995, 16 and 24.

⁷⁷ Inness, 82.

⁷⁸ Daskam, Smith, 'The First Game', 4. See, too, Arthur Bartlett Maurice, 'The Undergraduate in Fiction', *The Bookman*, July 1900, 424–26 (426).

'behave' in general and be 'Very Respectful' in her letters to the man on whom she relies for support. Capitalizing – and thus ridiculing – the admonition, Webster made it evident that Judy will not display the commanded servility. At the same time, as in religious matters it is platitudinous application she is seen to be against: Mrs Lippett trusts her to be grateful for her education, and so she is, whole-heartedly, but not because she is told to be. In the novel, Judy never adapts to society's expectations of a womanly woman; rather, college develops her strong-minded independence. It is apparent that the years at the orphanage taught the young woman to put on a face of subordination; nevertheless, there is no sign that they have turned her into a 'dehumanized inmate' or a 'mindless' and 'voiceless' girl, as Anne Kathryn Phillips contends.⁷⁹ Defiant actions such as Judy's 'Blue Wednesday' essay, her drawings of Mrs Lippett on the woodshed door, and the faces she claims to have made behind the trustees' backs are all inconsistent with such a description. Judy's letters to her daddy-trustee contain reminders of her none-too-perfect record before college. Similarly, Patty's conduct – both in *Just Patty* and in *When Patty Went to College* – occasionally comes quite close to what was generally thought acceptable for boys and men, being very far away from that feminine behaviour which should be informed by sympathy and docility. In spite of their different stations in life, Judy shares much of Patty's disposition, although – for obvious reasons – she has to be more wary and is more sensitive.⁸⁰

Protagonists in the four novels express opinions regarding attitudes to and demands on women which at times agree with contemporaneous views on innate gendered qualities, but often question them. Rosamund in the first college novel, Brown's *Two College Girls*, reacts from the start against her parents' different expectations of herself and her undergraduate brother, while Judy, in the course of her education, grows increasingly irritated with the more general expectation that girls should be moulded into a 'womanly' group characterized by its 'emotional' nature instead of developing individuality and independence. Schwartz's Lydia and Elinor express impatience with the rules at a women's college, which differ markedly from the lenient ones at a college for their male friends. Fuller's Christine, however, at times voices agreement with the view that a woman's moral standards should be higher than those expected from a man: a man may not be 'worthy'; nevertheless, a woman must be worthy of her love for him and 'help

⁷⁹ Webster, 1912/1995, 9 and 13; Anne Kathryn Phillips, 'Domestic Transcendentalism in the novels of Louisa May Alcott, Gene Stratton-Porter, and Jean Webster' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Connecticut, UMI Ann Arbor, 1993), 168, and "'Yours Most Loquaciously': Voice in Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*", *Children's Literature Annual of the Modern Language Association* 27, 1999, 64–86 (71).

⁸⁰ Webster, 1912/1995, 21, 33 and 52.

him towards his manliness'. In *Across the Campus*, irritation against obstreperous undergraduate behaviour is more apparent than student impatience with women's position or the stifling rules and regulations illustrated in *Elinor's College Career*. Neither novel focused on the beneficial personal development towards independence which Webster emphasized, particularly in her last two novels, *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Dear Enemy*.⁸¹

The novels contain echoes of the common opinion that the gender of academically educated women must determine the kind of work to which they should devote their lives. They ought to like their proper work; certainly they were expected to be better at it than men.

The development of the two protagonists in the earliest college novel, Brown's *Two College Girls*, shows that the outcome of higher education can be quite unpredictable, particularly on this point.⁸² The girl who was mainly intent on pleasure becomes ambitious and professionally goal-oriented, whereas the ambitious one regards graduation as an intellectual end; on Commencement, Brown's Edna is seen to be successfully integrated into the female class destined to care and set a good example for family and society. Her college studies, it is true, have given her a wider understanding of what learning is; more importantly, however, they have made her familiar with the standards of conduct and social efficiency that women were expected to meet. Academic education has hence transformed this character into a person who will conform to the feminine virtues generally aspired to within the boundaries set by the womanly-woman ideal. The same message is conveyed about many seniors as a group. At the end of their college education they have become 'domestic', sitting by 'the evening lamp with work-basket and book'. The description is modelled on that of a harmonious family enjoying a peaceful moment together. Furthermore, their college education has trained the girls to appreciate 'some felicity of phrase or sudden turn of the story', a kind of proficiency which they can convey to husbands and children alike.⁸³

In society at large, women and girls were expected to regard motherhood and practical household as female priorities. While the story collections generally have more to say about women's social skills than about actual women's chores such as mending, cleaning, and cooking, Fuller's novel is distinct on the female priorities. The conclusion of one debate, for instance, is that higher education will fit a graduate for domestic life. Though the question actually concerns men, their inclusion in the story is clearly an attempt to satisfy any anxiety concerning women on that point. In addition, even

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 49 and 164; Brown 50–51; Schwartz, 1906, 7, 140–42; Fuller, 386.

⁸² See, too, alumnae discussing their graduate friends in Daskam, *Smith*, 'At Commencement', 277–318.

⁸³ Brown, 1886, 289.

though Christine is both alluring and witty, a young, attracted professor is not convinced of her merits until he happens to see her fondling a baby, while making a distinction clear to some freshmen of the college community, whom the narrator describes as 'starving and babyless': Christine agrees with their view that 'females' might not care for children, but argues that 'all *women*' do. It is clear that a love of children is required of anyone who aspires to be called a 'woman'. After this event, echoing the words in the Commencement speech in Goodloe's story, the professor is positive that women students realize what their 'greatest reality of all' is. Any reader will understand that he refers to matrimony and domesticity.⁸⁴ His comment reminds us of the king's words in *The Princess*: 'The bearing and the training of a child/ Is woman's wisdom.'⁸⁵

In Brown's and Webster's novels respectively, there is an interesting distinction between views on domestic activities: the 'duty of the educated woman to her needle' is discussed in *Two College Girls*. A professor's wife is in two minds about this issue. On the one hand, she claims, technical inventions have provided woman with possibilities for other occupations in which she can make use of her independent mind; on the other, she obviously regards sewing as a particularly feminine skill because she still advises students to learn how to use a needle. Towards the end of *Two College Girls*, Edna expresses delight in using that tool – an activity she resented before college. As was mentioned earlier, her senior friends share that interest.⁸⁶ Twenty-six years later, Judy does not hesitate to mention that she is bad at hemming, and that a man manages cooking better than she does. Nor is she afraid to show how 'wobbly' a knitter she is.⁸⁷ Similarly, Edna is intent on learning about food preserves, whereas Judy merely mentions her willingness to learn about good housekeeping – an interest she never articulates anywhere else in the novel – in order to obtain permission to visit her friend's family.⁸⁸

A similar distinction is not apparent in the recurring theme of interior decorating in which domesticity is implicit: nevertheless, the ways in which students arrange and adorn their rooms are significant at more levels than one. While Inness looks for signs of the girls' '[undermining] the institution's disciplinary function', I find several instances – particularly in the four novels – where students are initiated into aesthetic and practical strategies which

⁸⁴ Fuller, 268.

⁸⁵ Tennyson, V: 456.

⁸⁶ Brown, 1886, 96–97, 226, and 287.

⁸⁷ Webster, 1912/1995, 123, 114, and 158. A graduate teacher with professional ambitions abandons her plans when she is asked to marry in Mary R. P. Hatch's 'Nan's Career', *The New England Magazine* XLII, 1910, 440–47 and 561–63 (563). An admitted poor knitter, she will nevertheless be content to 'sew on buttons and knit [the man's] stockings'. In Gallaher, 'Neither a Lender nor a Borrower Be', 123–162, students cheerfully agree that a 'man can mar a home ... only a woman can make it'.

⁸⁸ Webster, 1912, 18 and 100; Brown, 1886, 58 and 259.

are suggestive of their future responsibilities in charge of a home.⁸⁹ In these matters, for instance, Webster's Judy and Brown's Edna subordinate themselves to their roommates' expertise. Describing her room, Judy combines details about the colours and materials that her friend helped her choose with information about her own ingenuity: she hides a spot on a rug and constructs a comfortable window seat. In the same manner, Edna receives practical lessons in making a home attractive. At home she was constantly disappointed not to register any of the pleasure in home-making promised by all 'moralists' (the narrator's term); after all, she had done her duty scrupulously. The narrator points out that although nobody asked her to do anything about it back home, her lack of interest in redecorating a poorly equipped family parlour is a negative sign. That information paves the way for her subsequent aesthetic development; she learns to appreciate undertakings of that kind – at college. These two characters hence testify to another good influence of the academic environment, that of creativity in domestic matters.

Many of the heroines in juvenile classics are trained in household tasks at home. In *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Town on the Prairie*, for instance, Anne and Laura accept responsibility for each duty or 'chore' after a period of supervision. Laura reacts against that kind of work and would prefer to join her father and take part in his activities instead; but she is gently corrected by her mother. A girl's place is clearly defined. (Laura's grandmother taught school; so did her mother, and so does Laura for a few terms after little formal schooling. All three of them left that occupation when they married and settled down as housewives at an early age.⁹⁰) Practical domestic instruction has no place in college fiction. The rise of advanced formal domestic education is, however, visible in the last volume of the Anne-series, where a girl takes a course in 'Household Science'. Similarly, a series book contains information about instruction in 'Domestic Science'.⁹¹

Fictional characters often express doubts that college graduates will be able to cope with such practical matters. Uncles in *Two College Stories* open the issue in fiction by wondering in a straightforward and prosaic manner: 'We'll see if she cooks a piece of beefsteak any better for all her algebr'y'. Published some ten years later and stressing the advantages of higher education for girls, a serialized story about three girls at college was nevertheless at pains to point out that home and family had nothing to fear from such education. A young woman worries that four years will rob her of 'all the

⁸⁹ Inness, 30–34.

⁹⁰ Laura Ingalls Wilder, *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, 126–27, 217–18; *Little Town on the Prairie*, 301–07 (NY: Harper 1939 and 1941: repr. London: Lutterworth, 1972); *These Happy Golden Years* (NY: Harper, 1943: repr. Puffin, 1970), 216.

⁹¹ Montgomery, *Rilla of Ingleside* (NY: Frederick Stokes, 1921; repr. NY: Bantam Books, 1992), 275; Nell Speed, *Molly Brown's Post-Graduate Days* (NY: Hurst, 1914), 187–200.

training there is in that life [at home] for the future home-making that comes to most women in some shape and [instead] be set down here [at college] where she is *just* a bachelor student ' (emphasis added). However, when another girl is at home during holidays, her experiences are seen to allay such fears. This girl student realizes that college actually heightens the importance of the family: she 'felt that no four years could change her place at home; and she had a new glimpse of the dearness of the home life, seeing its value with eyes the clearer for a different experience'.⁹²

Decades later, Montgomery's Aunt Jamesina wonders if mathematical wizard Phil will be able to cook in her future impecunious household. Similarly, although she seeks refuge in Anne's academic success to balance Jane Andrews's matrimonial one, it is quite obvious that Mrs Lynde, another of Montgomery's characters, still considers the latter achievement to be preferable. While sniffing at Anne's college education, she inspects married Anne's capabilities as a housewife in detail and is relieved to find that college has not ruined Marilla's domestic education: the contents of Anne's bread box and scrap pail are exactly what they should be. 'I always judge a housekeeper by those, that's what.' Taken together, such attitudes show that a woman's intellectual aspirations had to be combined with her still-traditional gender role in a society which was not prepared for the New Woman.⁹³

In general, domestic issues do not take up much space in women's college fiction, even though physiology, hygiene, and ethics – subjects connected with the domestic sphere – are often mentioned. As we saw, *Two College Girls* does refer to household matters, which may have been called for in those early days. For instance, a professor's wife stands out as a perfect housekeeper and an excellent hostess: the narrator claims that the girls learn more from her than they would in 'lectures on domestic culture'. That declaration may be regarded as a reassuring argument in favour of liberal-arts education for women in those early years, especially as the fictional girls learn both manners and taste from the same good woman.⁹⁴

⁹² Brown, 1886, 15; Anderson (Chase), 329 and 504.

⁹³ L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of the Island* (Boston: Page, 1915; repr. London: Puffin, 1994), 207, 280, and *Anne's House of Dreams* (NY: Stokes, 1917; repr. NY: Bantam, 1992), 89. The 'New Woman' is a common concept in texts discussing American women in the progressive period. The definition provided by Sally Mitchell for the English 'New Girl' is applicable to the American term as well: 'The new girl moved into spheres where her mother had no advice to give; she did things her mother had not done and faced issues her mother did not face – if not in reality, at least in fancy.' See *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880-1915* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9.

⁹⁴ Brown, 1886, 95.

Deportment and appearances

On graduation day, an academically trained student would be well aware that visitors were not only – indeed, not even primarily – going to pay attention to her intellectual capacity. Tennyson's idea of the 'sweet girl graduate', with its various implications, is a powerful notion, and the concern with appearance in *The Princess* is emphasized by the way the invaders in the poem (dressed up as women students) choose tutors according to 'which was prettiest'. Similarly, the fictional girl-student in America generally senses that her exterior attributes are more important in the public eye than her academic attainments.⁹⁵

The observance of manners was important in the so-called 'finishing education', mentioned in *Two College Girls* and later referred to in, for instance, Wilder's *Farmer Boy*. Laura Ingalls's future sister-in-law 'studying to be a fine lady' is at home on leave from a ladies' academy, trying in vain to polish her family members' behaviour by imposing the insights which she has acquired at school. However, her instruction on how to drink tea in a proper way is defeated by her mother's factual knowledge about the history of cups and saucers and also the analysis and conclusion based on it. When Jean Webster wrote *Just Patty*, she was relying on memories from the boarding school that prepared her intellectually for Vassar. Some of her chapters relate how womanly virtues and skills were taught and trained; for example, at dinner Patty and her fellow pupils have to practise the art of stimulating conversation – even in a foreign language – as well as learn how to enter a room gracefully. Their behaviour is relentlessly corrected. Finding Patty and her friends sitting everywhere but on proper chairs, her Latin teacher informs them that '[l]adies don't perch about on the furniture'.⁹⁶

Echoes of the same priorities linger on in *Anne of Windy Poplars*. Graduate Anne's colleague Katherine jealously compares her unattractive self with the delightful way in which Anne enters a room. Anne, of course, never took part in behaviour lessons of the kind described in Webster's book; when bringing her up, Marilla focused on practical domestic tasks and guidance. Unaware of that particular background, Katherine is nevertheless more concerned with Anne's skills in respect of manners – a capability which Katherine's own training failed to give her – than with the younger woman's academic superiority to herself.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Tennyson, Prologue: 148; I: 230. The men in the frame story regard women who work at a university as pruders and dowagers; Prologue: 141.

⁹⁶ Brown, 1886, 34; Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Farmer Boy* (NY: Harper, 1933; repr. London: Lutterworth, 1970), 296–97; Webster, 1911, 11.

⁹⁷ Montgomery, *Anne of Windy Poplars* (NY: Frederick Stokes, 1936; repr. NY: Bantam, 1992), 150.

College stories abound in instances of characters improving their conduct and learning social skills, generally thanks to other students' interventions. For example, while Edna's handshake at home, when she greets the only relative who actually understands her intellectual ambition, is 'limp' and 'loose', Rosamund teaches her at college not only that a good handshake should convey friendly feelings, but also that her clothes and looks might be improved.⁹⁸ It is noteworthy that Edna's awareness of such matters does not evolve where general opinion considered that it should – in the family. Instead, and contrary to general anxiety on this point, a college environment is depicted as the appropriate soil for inculcating feminine values and behaviour. Showing Edna how to dance is another of Rosamund's ways of luring the reluctant grind to activities outside academic studies. Thanks to such initiatives, Edna gradually loses her diffidence and begins to take part in the girls' discussions. At home, studies had taken precedence over aesthetics; as a reformed student, conversely, she deplores the 'ill-balanced' externals – that is, the short hair and masculine stride – of a fellow student. Edna is considered to be a bright student; nevertheless she fails to notice that she has altered her priorities at college.⁹⁹

Two protagonists teach Myra in *Elinor's College Career* what manners should, in their view, be expected of a college girl. When she does not feel their scrutinizing glances, Myra scampers away in an uncontrolled manner, dumps her clothes anywhere, and sits where she pleases; but when the other students are present she walks more sedately, hangs up her clothes neatly and feels guilty if they see her sit on a table – and the narrator makes it quite clear that the influence of the better-behaved students is a beneficial one.

Schwartz's Elinor, as well as Fuller's Christine, is preoccupied with appearances and correct demeanour. However, they lack Judy's intense joy and satisfaction over beautiful clothes and her own pleasing image in the mirror. Judy learns to like and even admire herself, whereas Elinor, especially, is anxious to live up to a preconceived vision of the perfect woman. Elinor and, to a lesser degree, Lydia and Christine illustrate a process of adaptation to general notions regarding women and their looks. Neither narrators nor any other characters make any ironic comments on their concern with appearance.¹⁰⁰ By and large, college stories are apt to spell out that people with no experience of higher education would worry about a vague 'loss of

⁹⁸ Brown, 1886, 9–12, 87–88. Similarly, the 'limp' handshake of a girl is an unfavourable attribute in Cook, 150.

⁹⁹ Brown, 1886, 226.

¹⁰⁰ See, also, *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'A Diplomatic Crusade', 257–296, in which story students seriously discuss how to avoid being 'cold, learned, dehumanized' or becoming 'blood-less and thin-lipped', which they fear 'is one of the dangers of the college woman'. In Cook, 'The Trial of Professor Lamont', 41–87, students characterize a brilliant junior as 'clever', but 'cold'.

femininity' as a result of it. That idea is generally presented with ironic overtones: details pertaining to poor eyesight and a neglect of hair, complexion, colours, body, clothes, and social skills are frequent.¹⁰¹

As so often, concerns with regard to attitudes in society, in particular among men, were anticipated in *The Princess*: students who – unlike Ida – look forward to a home of their own, and consequently marriage, fear that men will find 'learned' women unattractive.¹⁰² In fiction this idea is a recurrent, usually ironic, theme. Great-Aunt Nancy in *Emily of New Moon* is blunt about it: even at a young age she had been aware of what a girl's priorities ought to be in a society where success depended on the right proposal. Therefore she warns her young and talented relative in the following terms: '...between a fool and a sensible woman did a man ever hesitate? The fool wins every time...I got [my husband] by pretending to be a fool. Emily, you remember that. You have brains – hide them. Your ankles will do more for you than your brains ever will.' Several college stories contain similar comments; the college girl can be liked 'in spite of her brains', but only when she has learnt to keep these 'peculiarities' in the background by accentuating her female attractions.¹⁰³

When aspects of appearance are thus prioritized before good sense and intelligence, a hint of narratorial disapproval can usually be felt. When a woman expresses views of the kind that Tennyson's king gives vent to, she is commonly ridiculed or portrayed as a cynic, like Montgomery's Aunt Nancy.

Men in women's college fiction are seldom as outspoken as the prince's father in *The Princess*. Nevertheless, their distinct appreciation of good looks may result in irritation. Admiring a senior on baccalaureate day, an old gentleman exclaims: 'A sweet girl-graduate'. The superficial attitude expressed in that overheard remark infuriates the girl. There is nothing 'sweet' or 'girlish' about her situation: she is thoroughly miserable, having to make a difficult decision regarding her future, a decision involving a choice between morality and money. Feeling 'angry contempt for the ridiculous,

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, Daskam, *Smith*, 'The Education of Elizabeth', 121–147 (deteriorated complexion) and 'A Few Diversions', 203–243 (short hair, hideous specs, sarcastic speech); *Bryn Mawr Stories*: 'In Maytime', 73–96 ('spectacled phenomena of learning'), 'A Diplomatic Crusade', 257–296 (a 'thistle-down' or a 'fearful prig').

¹⁰² Tennyson, II: 438–42. Humorous comments on men's anxious attitudes towards educated women can be found in, for instance, Goodloe, 1895, 'La Belle Hélène', 19–35, 'Her Decision', 148–49, and 'Revenge', 165–88; Webster, 1903, 23–37.

¹⁰³ L.M. Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon* (NY: Frederick Stokes, 1923; repr. NY: Bantam Books, 1993), 257. The quotations are from *Bryn Mawr Stories* and 'Her Masterpiece', 40: a hostess uses the word 'peculiarities' to imply anything connected with a college graduate. In 1910, *The Outlook* contained a similar message, articulated in earnest by the Duchess of Marlborough, née Vanderbilt, in 'Higher Education for Women', 792–93: Husbands-to-be, she claimed, as well as she herself, appreciated the new type of college woman, provided that 'women [were] tactful enough not always to worst their husbands in argument, and to keep any superabundance of knowledge up their sleeve', 792. For similar attitudes in college fiction, see, for instance, Goodloe, 1895, 'La Belle Hélène', 65, and 'A Short Study in Evolution', 239; Webster, 1903, 23–37.

hackneyed expression', she wonders why it still exists. College fiction is, however, imbued with the importance of a graceful and attractive appearance, and it is clear that whatever anybody felt about it, the girl in higher education at the time was in an exceptionally vulnerable position and simply could not afford to neglect her looks. Schwartz's Lydia, for instance, interrupts her last Christmas vacation so as not to exert herself among her non-student friends. Every precaution must be taken so that Commencement guests 'might not find pretexts for quips and cranks over the array of worn and pallid maidens with diplomas in their hands'.¹⁰⁴ Irritation over such prevalent attitudes is apparent in the narrator's way of describing Lydia's concern.

College stories thus testify to student awareness that an academic woman's appearance will often be considered more important than her intellectual achievements, and characters are shown to brave both these challenges. A 'worn and pallid' graduate would indicate sickness due to the congenital incapacity for studies that was claimed to be inherent in the female sex. Exasperation with such notions might be veiled by irony; but its presence and underlying force are unmistakable.

Women's health

As was mentioned in chapter one, scholars of either sex were generally thought to bear the marks of physical decline. Nevertheless, when higher education was on the agenda, deteriorating health due to intellectual work was normally only an issue when the students were women. Fictional illustration is supplied, for instance, by Schwartz's novel, where visitors who appreciate some seniors' exquisite smiles and lovely hair remark, with a sigh of relief, that the young women possess colours and curves 'in spite of' their hard academic work.¹⁰⁵

Fictional characters refer to the anxiety provoked by the combination of girls and studies and often adapt accordingly. For instance, when a principal character and her favourite lecturer in *Two College Girls* chat about college education in general, the teacher shows her concern, suddenly asking whether the girl might not be working too hard. 'I shall watch your health. You must not break down, for your sake and for that of the college'. Similarly, the potential impact of intellectual exertion on a girl's body and soul arises when, later, girl students depart on a geological outing. At the sight of the vigorous and happy young women, lady passengers remember graduates

¹⁰⁴ Tennyson, Prologue, 142 and I:230; Gallaher, 'On Baccalaureate Sunday', 252; Schwartz, 1906, 305.

¹⁰⁵ Schwartz, 1906, 314.

known to them and immediately enlarge 'upon any cases of ill-health that had come to their knowledge'. When a girl falls ill and dies, however, the lady doctor blames her family ancestry, and there are indications that the girl has been standing in a damaging draught.¹⁰⁶ In that novel, Brown's *Two College Girls*, Rosamund constitutes a refutation of the anxiety mentioned above. In her family, studies are viewed as a threat to her brother's health; her mother is afraid his academic work will be bad for him. No danger of that kind is apprehended for the sister. As neither sibling runs into any health problems as a result of their ambitious work, Brown's book is an early carrier of a message resonant in all college stories: no characters fall severely ill because of their academic studies, nor do their bodies deteriorate during their college education.¹⁰⁷

The fact that two out of the four chief protagonists in *Elinor's College Career* are only sixteen when they go to college is notable in this context. The emphasis on their youth might be calculated to strengthen the idea that anyone who was well prepared could benefit from college. Quite the opposite had been predicted in books and articles by Dr Clarke and his supporters, which described the physical weakness by which any college girl, especially one so young, would inevitably be affected. Elinor does have one short spell in bed, knocked out by the strain of examinations. Apart from that occasion, she shows no signs of ill-health. However, she makes use of Clarke's spectre of 'nervous strain' to ward off the danger of having to share future living quarters with an unwanted partner.¹⁰⁸

Some years earlier, one of Webster's stories had shown how the main protagonist skilfully plants the same idea and benefits from it. Patty is lagging behind in Old English, owing to sheer negligence. Learning about an imminent written test, she saunters into the doctor's office. Her pretence is a feeling of fatigue. Without explicitly blaming her study situation, she cunningly uses her knowledge that this is how her feigned tiredness will be explained. Causing the expected great alarm, she is therefore able to postpone her ordeal in the classroom. Sent to the infirmary she can catch up in peace and quiet, cramming while the staff believe she is resting.¹⁰⁹

Elinor's friend attempts to use the same excuse in Schwartz's story: trying to explain why her Latin translation is so execrable, Myra reminds her instructor how the latter had warned the girls not to allow their work to master them. She is not as successful at 'persuading' the teacher as Patty is at manipulating the doctor; in this novel, faculty members are no longer afraid

¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Clare in *Across the Campus* falls ill because her constitution is delicate.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, 1886, 197 and 246, 207 and 214, 50–51.

¹⁰⁸ Schwartz, 1906, 150 and 89. On Dr Clarke, see the section on 'Health' in chapter two.

¹⁰⁹ Webster, 1903, 105–12.

that the physical well-being of college students will deteriorate because of overwork. Everyone, the teacher included, realizes that Myra has simply not devoted enough energy to her homework. Nevertheless, health as such turns out to be an issue later on. No other reason can explain why the college doctor in the same novel, supported by the principal, forbids the eagerly expected interclass basketball games, unless it stops raining. Besides, the fate of the character called Lydia proves an interesting one: on the one hand, the well-regulated student frets over an open window that might cause her friends to 'catch [their] death of cold', since college girls tend to fall ill on the 'slightest pretext' (which they do not in fact do in any college novel). Similarly, she admonishes her friends that hysterical mirth is unwholesome (which is a rather strange comment – if anything, it would be considered unwomanly). On the other hand, ironically, Lydia herself catches a serious disease. But this is not a natural consequence of diligent studies – it is a punishment; she catches scarlet fever because she will not adhere to college rules.¹¹⁰

Schwartz's novel contains several references to women as delicate persons, even though most of them prove physically robust throughout the story. One student, for instance, gives vent to the inflexible – and, in society at large, generally accepted – conviction that the female sex does not know when to stop working. When their friend Ruth has been advised to study during the summer vacation, Elinor hopes she is strong enough for such an ordeal, while Lydia even questions whether Ruth will survive the physical and mental strain involved. Girls, she claims, 'are so ambitious that they ignore their own limitations, and overstep the danger line before they are aware of it'. As in Brown's novel, however, apprehensions and the actual fate of students do not coincide. Ruth remains fit, managing her studies extremely well, even combining them with necessary paid work.¹¹¹

If parents are against women's education, they often state health concerns as a reason for their disapproval. Mrs Barry in *Anne of Green Gables* frets about young Diana's interest in books. She is afraid her daughter's eyes will suffer from reading 'entirely too much'. Although she blames her husband for abetting Diana in her 'poring' over books, they are later seen to be united in their agreement not to send their girl away for further education.¹¹² Even though parental aversion to women's education is usually associated with genuine concern for the daughter's welfare, that anxiety usually proves to be a misconception. *Smith College Stories* tells of a father who eventually schemes successfully to make his girl leave after barely one term. In his let-

¹¹⁰ Schwartz, 29, 266, 126, 11, and 141–53. Students are forbidden to go 'punging' on passing sleighs. Lydia openly disobeys that decree; the family she then acquaints herself with is infected with the disease.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 186–87.

¹¹² Montgomery, 1908/1997, 82 and 223.

ters he describes her as nervous, strained, and delicate; consequently, he suggests, the increased mental effort required of her is incompatible with the family temperament. However, the reason why the girl is having problems is that she is too fond of social activities and studies too little. Similarly, in the same collection a mother asks college 'to curb if necessary [her twin daughters'] passion for study' – a request which is utterly superfluous and therefore a source of amusement for the fellow students.¹¹³

Women's education: parental attitudes and influence

The two fathers in *The Princess* share their unease over Ida's experiment and her dream of making women equal to men, even though they articulate their opinions differently: one is aggressively hostile, the other a 'whiner', grumbling about the princess's efforts to strengthen the position of women. '[Ida and her friends] mastered *me*,' complains the latter, adding that 'all [Ida] is and does is awful.' Ida's younger suitor and brothers take a more lenient view; in their opinion, the princess just wanted too much too quickly.¹¹⁴

The protagonists' mothers are dead, and the memories of them glorified; the prince remembers his as being 'mild as any saint', while Princess Ida's sudden memory of hers – 'the good Queen' – triggers her own change of personality. The strong will, set ideas, and pride which have directed the young woman's actions are held to emanate primarily from the woman who had the care of her as a motherless girl, Lady Blanche. She is blamed for Ida's loss of womanly virtues, because she invites the young woman to engage in higher education as a means to gaining equality with men. That goal, and the way in which her institution is organized, are held to be detrimental to women – an opinion which is heightened by the unfavourable portrait of the substitute mother.¹¹⁵

Fatherly opposition to daughters studying at college along the lines expressed in *The Princess* is not apparent in college fiction. Nor, interestingly, is the maternal support which Linda W. Rosenzweig claims was strong at the time.¹¹⁶ To a greater extent, women's campus stories verify Agnes Rogers's findings according to which the father's influence was decisive up to 1910. Although she did not obtain enough alumna answers in 1940 to make her conclusion reliable, that conclusion nevertheless lends a measure of confirmation to a fictional pattern.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Case of Interference', 51, and 'The Education of Elizabeth', 123–47.

¹¹⁴ Tennyson, I: 145 and 139.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV: 264–349.

¹¹⁶ See the section called 'State Schools' in chapter one.

¹¹⁷ Agnes Rogers, *Vassar Women: An Informal Study* (Rahway New Jersey: Quinn & Boden, 1940), 38–39.

On a few occasions college-story fathers expect too much of their academic daughters,¹¹⁸ but mostly they are supportive.¹¹⁹ While Judy's 'Daddy' is certainly not her father, she does go to college because a man believes in her ability to cope with the education and to make a living on the strength of it. Men are conspicuous by their absence in *Elinor's College Career*; but the other two novels which I have studied in depth, Brown's *Two College Girls* and Fuller's *Across the Campus*, present father characters who support female education.

In Brown's early story, the two protagonists' fathers take an equally great pride in their offspring. They admit to recognizing themselves in their daughters, an acknowledgement which plays a part in their active support for the girls' college plans. Edna's quiet and despondent parent sees the practical advantages of higher education; the girl will be able to support herself. Admiring his daughter's ambition and cleverness, he believes in the American way of giving everyone 'a fair chance'. Even when he lies dying, he clings to the idea of her college education. Appreciating her gender-specific attractions, Rosamund's successful father nevertheless expects his daughter to perform great deeds, deciding that his girl is to have 'the best education that money can buy'. He respects her 'decided talent for business' to the point where he feels certain she could manage a life on her own without any pecuniary support. Nevertheless, he looks on her occasional manifestations of specifically feminine virtues with marked approval. These parental views are shared by minor father characters visiting the college.¹²⁰

Both her father and her brothers support Christine in *Across the Campus* when she chooses college. For her, education is the lesser evil compared to the spectacle of 'coming out' in society – that is what her mother wants for her, as other society women did for their daughters. Fuller does not suggest that Christine's mother is callous; rather, her stance comes across as an expression of a maternal desire to keep the daughter in a sphere in which the mother is conversant with conditions and able to maintain a mother-daughter relationship. At the same time, this attitude shows a natural fear of the unknown.¹²¹ Christine, however, dismisses the offered alternative because it would make her feel like being 'turned loose to graze in society like any cow'. It is natural to connect the defiant attitude with which Christine enters col-

¹¹⁸ See, for instance, *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'The Apostasy of Anita Fiske', 239–55, and Goodloe, 1895, 'The Genius of Bowlder Bluff', 245–68.

¹¹⁹ See, for instance, Daskam, 1900, 'A Family Affair', 151–201 and 'At Commencement', 279–318, in which story a father testifies to the amazing development of his originally helpless and bashful daughter into a competent and effective administrator.

¹²⁰ Brown, 1886, 58, 19, 158, 177, 161–66, and 34–35.

¹²¹ Other mother characters of this kind are found in, for instance, Daskam, 1900, 'Bisquits ex Machina', 83–119, and *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 1901, 'Catherine's Career', 203–236.

lege to her upbringing, in which her mother was often absent. She remains attached to the male part of her family, being 'strangely' like her father: both of them adhere to a principle of honour. Unlike most college girls, she confides her difficulties in a letter to her father, and when it seems certain that she will be elected Junior president, she hopes the distinction will make her 'more worthy of papa and the boys'.¹²²

In classic juvenile fiction, substitute fathers belonging to an older generation are especially apt to take genuine and admiring pride in a girl's educational success. Jeremiah Cobb in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, Matthew in *Anne of Green Gables*, and Cousin Jimmy in the books about Emily have no children of their own. They remain firm defenders of the girl protagonist whenever they must take sides, belonging to the staunchest believers in and supporters of a proper education for her. Anne knows for certain that Matthew would be proud if she managed a B.A., while both Jeremiah and Jimmy scheme to bring their favourites back into the pre-college education the runaways will lose if they cannot endure their aunts' oppression. Jimmy reminds Emily of how lucky she actually is: 'Your grandmother Archibald would have lived on herring tails to get an education – many a time I've heard her say it.'¹²³

Laura Ingalls Wilder's stories are fictionalized tales about her own family, in which the mother is portrayed as being very womanly. At the same time, she is in fact the one who is firm about her girls' education. One reason for her insistence is implied: she had worked as a teacher herself. Sending the daughters to college is of course out of their reach for financial and geographical reasons, but not only does she make her migrant husband promise to stay put once their girls have reached school age. Although the family's finances are very tight, she also sees to it that Mary, handicapped after scarlet fever, can leave home for advanced studies adapted to the blind. The only complication occurs, briefly, when Mary shows her independence by choosing to spend her vacation with a friend instead of with her family. At first Mrs Ingalls is taken aback, but later she explains to her disappointed family that Mary's college period is her one chance to 'be her own person'. Apart from that one occasion, Mary adapts to the traditional role of a daughter. Education helps her to a richer life, albeit within the traditional boundaries, as she remains with her parents.

One reason for accepting education for a girl is that she has to make a living, which is Marilla's pragmatic reason for supporting Anne's higher edu-

¹²² Fuller, 6, 196, and 156.

¹²³ Montgomery, 1908/1997, 258, and *Emily Climbs* (NY: Frederick Stokes, 1925; NY: repr. Bantam Books, 1993), 85; Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903; in *The Writings of Kate Douglas Wiggin*, vol. VI, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917).

cation; similarly, the matron of the orphanage Judy grew up in realizes the benefit of college.¹²⁴ An interesting mother in Brown's *Two College Girls* actually insists on a career for her twin daughters after graduation (in 1886!); these girls must prove themselves by earning five hundred dollars a year. If paid work is out of the question, so, often, is higher education. Montgomery presented a substitute mother who held that view in *Emily of New Moon*; Emily feverishly dreams of advanced studies, but in the Murray household no new-fangled idea is accepted. Emily's aunts are not rich, so they would benefit if their niece could support herself; pride in their ancestry and the respect they enjoy in the community forbid that experiment, however. A mother in a Bryn Mawr story, who also belongs to an old family, harbours similar opinions. Her strong-willed daughter cannot be prevented from going to college; and friends pity the poor mother whose daughter is such a disappointment, compared to theirs who accompany them to teas and pass time with embroidery. Like Christine's mother in *Across the Campus*, these characters typically express hopes for a successful 'season' ending in a good marriage.¹²⁵

Thus several mothers in college stories fear that academic studies will be harmful to young women's position and prospects in society. Their attitude resembles the one underlying Tennyson's kings' fear: they worry about the threat to stability, in society and between the sexes, that college for women entails. Why, some of them seem to ask, should their daughters demand more than the traditional education, modelled to fit the leisured class of girls, making them ornaments to home and society? However, that kind of education is presented as old-fashioned in the early (1886) *Two College Girls*, where a minor character in favour of the fresh opportunities for girls compares the education which was once open to her with present intellectual opportunities offered to young women.¹²⁶ When some of Edna's aunts praise the old-fashioned education in the first chapter of *Two College Girls*, that view clearly emphasizes their narrow-mindedness, whereas the aunt who sees her own dreams fulfilled in Edna's college plans stands out as sincere and trustworthy. In Goodloe's *College Girls*, published some ten years later, a daughter's finishing education is praised, whereas a cousin's extremely advanced studies are unfavourably compared to it. Even though that attitude is ridiculed, the finishing kind of education is still obviously not entirely outdated by 1895.¹²⁷ Whether an intellectually educated girl could expect to get a hus-

¹²⁴ Wilder, 1939/1972, 126 and 219; 1943/1970, 147; Webster, 1912/1995, 50.

¹²⁵ Brown, 1886, 295; *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'Catherine's Career', 203–236.

¹²⁶ The following components are mentioned – in a belittling fashion – as forming parts of a finishing education: a 'science, a language, and an accomplishment', that is 'a little botany, a little French, and a little painting or music': Brown, 1886, 34.

¹²⁷ Goodloe, 1895, 'La Belle Hélène', 39–43.

band is the real point at issue: the worry expressed by the anti-college characters is that an insufficiently domesticated daughter with an abundance of advanced ideas might scare young men.

Schwartz's novel voices some criticism against mothers who are college graduates. Elinor's mother, an alumna, takes great pride in her own achievement. At an early point, she decided that her daughter should go to college, her attitude proving to be the opposite of motherly 'support' (typically shown to consist in gentle understanding and comfort). Aware of the knowledge required of a student, she has meticulously trained the girl for such an academic education from childhood. However, as Elinor feels she cannot live up to her mother's aspirations for her, she is hostile to the project and therefore unable to derive much real pleasure from academic endeavours. Elinor now feels free 'to revolt against the rules and duties which had oppressed her childhood'. Clearly, the motherly effort is not experienced as 'supportive' by the daughter. Nor is the mother, and the mother's development, held up as being worthy of imitation in *Elinor's College Career*. Mrs Offitt's pride in her college education is regarded – by her daughter and by the narrator – as a mark of intellectual arrogance, a quality also attributed to a fellow alumna. Her mother's warning about fastidiousness when choosing friends at college looms over Elinor and is one explanation of the protracted tension in her relationship with one student. In Schwartz's next book, *Beatrice Leigh at College*, a college-educated mother, who longed in vain to be a writer, persuades her miserable daughter, a mathematical prodigy, to study the electives that will make it possible for the daughter to fulfil the mother's dream. Finally she realizes where the young student's real genius lies and stops trying to bend her daughter to her will.¹²⁸

Most mother characters never graduated from a college; but ambition may still impel them. Schwartz's first book describes a student who is torn between an Emersonian father and an ambitious mother, between her father's advice to live up to the best in her, letting the rest go, and her mother's plans for her to succeed and lead her class.¹²⁹

Edna's mother, however, not only agrees with her husband that their daughter should have an academic education, although they have to save and scrape to send her there; when her husband dies, she does not even ask her daughter to return home and support her. This is a noteworthy characteristic in *Two College Girls*, as that kind of family claim is usually strong in college fiction. While fictional mothers are seen to be important in a favourable sense, their guiding role does not usually include the support for

¹²⁸ Schwartz, 1906, 13, 46, 294, and 12; and in *Beatrice Leigh at College: A Story for Girls* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1907), 271–82.

¹²⁹ Schwartz, 1899, 102–04.

intellectual ambition which Rosenzweig's investigation showed actually existed at the time – Edna's mother being an exception.¹³⁰

Webster deprived her protagonist in *Daddy-Long-Legs* of known origins. As a consequence, Judy labours under feelings of loneliness and loss beneath her facetious attitude. A favourable effect of her deprivations, however, is that the orphan character does not feel the burden of such parental claims as Elinor suffers from in Schwartz's novel nor of the bewildered abandonment with which Fuller explains Ardis's imperfect character. Nor does Judy ever have to consider the precarious relationship between 'the college, the girl and the parent' that was the substance of an article Marion Talbot wrote in 1910.¹³¹

When fictional girl students have been deprived of a comfortable relationship with their mothers, that is sometimes seen to be the reason for their less than perfect behaviour. In Brown's novel, the two college girls are in harmony with their families; therefore, the problems they face merely concern adaptation to college and to each other. In contrast, mother-daughter relations constitute a major issue not only in *Elinor's College Career*, which was mentioned above, but also and even more so in *Across the Campus*, where the narrator introduces a minor, likeable character by stating that 'one could tell at a glance just what kind of a mother she had at home'.

In one of her persuasive moods Ardis in *Across the Campus* postulates that both men and women have male as well as female sides, both of which are necessary and strengthened by their environment; members of the gentle sex, 'abominably' good at understanding, will practise that skill, while an all-male milieu makes a girl hesitant to show feelings. Fuller designed Clare, who grew up in a feminine environment, as a person able to comprehend and forgive Ardis, thereby actually confirming Ardis's idea of understanding women. Ardis's view that a girl in an all-male milieu is emotionally hampered is substantiated by the ways in which Fuller chose to describe Christine and Ardis. The former develops emotionally at college with its female atmosphere. The narrator records the thoughts of Christine's mother who knows that she, in her otherwise male-dominated family, has been too absent in the education of her daughter. She gratefully recognizes signs of improvement in the girl's disposition while she is at college; there Christine is 'more gentle than she used to be'. Ardis herself claims to have been 'brought up too much by men'; therefore the feminine elements in her character are undeveloped. Her assumption recalls an opinion expressed by the prince in *The Princess*: 'For woman is not undevelopt man,/But diverse ... /

¹³⁰ Brown, 1886, 14–20.

¹³¹ Marion Talbot, 'The College, the Girl and the Parent', *The North American Review* 192, September 1910, 349–58.

... /Not like to like, but like in difference.'¹³²

When Ardis finally admits that she longs to change her impassive attitude, she is caressed like a child by a maternal lecturer who has no children of her own, but nevertheless demonstrates motherly propensities: drawing Ardis into her arms, she fondles her 'gently' in her rocking-chair. The implications of this incident are emphasized by the fact that it recalls an earlier scene between Christine's mother and her daughter's old friend. In the rocking-chair episode, Ardis is reminded of and longs for the mother she never knew, because the mother left her family to fulfil her professional ambition.¹³³ Again, a woman's duties to her family are stressed: Ardis's mother stands out as a blameworthy character.

Clare is portrayed as being too vulnerable, spoilt by a mother's exaggerated cares, and Christine as being too strict, taught to suppress her feelings by her male environment. Nevertheless, the way Fuller made them act and react indicates that both students' homes equipped them with basic moral insights and an acceptance of their own selves. The glimpses Ardis provides from her background imply that, conversely, she grew up without any guidance that might have inculcated a common value-system – an impression supported by the narrator's comments. In addition, she alleges that she had nobody to ensure her self-acceptance through love and care. Consequently she had to learn how to fend for herself. Whereas Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* stressed the possibilities of the individual, irrespective of the circumstances in which she grew up, the message in *Across the Campus*, published thirteen years earlier, points to the overwhelming importance for daughters of a harmonious home – and particularly of a mother, whose presence, gentleness, and love seem mandatory for a good upbringing.

Teacher/peer control and guidance

Emily of New Moon contains an obvious example of apprehensions that college studies would diminish family control and influence. As so often, the issue of marriage is crucial: as evidence of the disastrous consequences which might ensue, the authoritarian aunt invokes the example of Emily's mother, the youngest, spoilt child, who was the only girl in the Murray family to be offered a higher education. She met Emily's father, an improper marriage partner in the eyes of the family, in her last year and later eloped with him. "'Have you forgotten what came of sending Juliet to Queen's?'" [Aunt Elizabeth] asked significantly.¹³⁴

¹³² Fuller, 260 and 229; Tennyson, VII: 259–62.

¹³³ Fuller, 195, 229, 201, and 428.

¹³⁴ Montgomery, 1923/1993, 300.

The desirability of preventing elopements is not an issue in college fiction, however. Members of the staff in *Two College Girls* take on other moral responsibilities. While male and married Professor Powers restricts himself to intellectual activities, women lecturers are concerned with character moulding. One of them wrestles with the problem of rescuing a 'poor, shabby little soul' who has deliberately told her a lie. Another is aware of such issues but prefers to evade them, not knowing how to act. When the undergraduates discuss their teachers, a general feeling of resentment against such preoccupation with character-building – in particular when they sense it to be moral hypocrisy – pervades their discourse. One student thus complains that every teacher 'carries [the girl] round on her mind, and does any amount of worrying over [her] spiritual, mental, and even [her] physical condition'. However, they do favour anyone in their faculty who manages to make them *think*.¹³⁵

In Brown's novel, teachers who show interest in the girls delicately nurture Edna in the art of being a good conversationalist. They thereby convey the blessings of conversation based on genuine listening, empathy, and interest. Beginning by sharing her own experiences as a solitary college student, one of them voices her hard-won awareness that if you want friends, you must show yourself to be friendly, that 'successful social life means giving as much as taking'. Miss Ireland's obvious frankness about her own shortcomings makes a deep impression on the confirmed recluse. Since the teacher does her best to make Edna feel at ease, the student soon finds herself joining in the conversation. 'Learning' is hence effected by 'doing'.¹³⁶

Another fictional adult who plays a significant part in moulding student characters is the history teacher's wife in *Two College Girls*. Albeit not employed to look after the welfare of the girls, she is a person to whom they turn for advice and enlightenment. Like the teacher, Miss Ireland, she functions primarily as a role model for the girls. These two women come across as moderate and considerate, and they express their belief in the educated woman's disciplined mind, sense of organization, and moral duty. *Anne of Avonlea* expresses similar views when Mrs Allen tells Anne that she believes college makes preparation for life easier.¹³⁷

Increasingly, teachers' watchfulness over feminine characteristics, which is so apparent in Brown's novel, diminishes. In Fuller's *Across the Campus*, teachers are already seen to be less willing to interfere when a student behaves badly. When the English lecturer discovers the extent of Ardis's devious actions, for instance, she hesitates to take action. Finding few means

¹³⁵ Brown, 1886, 104 and 119–20.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 94. Marion Talbot was to give similar advice: the quotation is from her book, 1910/1978, 198.

¹³⁷ Montgomery, *Anne of Avonlea* (Boston: Page, 1909; repr., Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1997), 397.

to correct Ardis, she does not take the disciplinary action which is required when a student fails to respect the obligations that 'must be recognized if the life [on campus] is to bring adequate results'.¹³⁸

When faculty in Schwartz's *Elinor's College Career* admonish students, they are primarily concerned with academic work; in fact, Schwartz warned against too close a relationship between students and lecturers by reminding her readers that teachers may come and go. Brown's, Fuller's, and Schwartz's books emphasize how girls gradually assume some of the responsibility generally connoted by the term *in loco parentis*. They care for friends in need and correct or point to faulty behaviour; consequently they learn diligence, deportment, and morals from one another instead of from faculty. In many cases, college is indeed represented as succeeding better than individual families in that respect because of its pervading atmosphere. At the same time, the short stories are particularly apt to show how certain students who do not fit into the social fellowship suffer and usually leave prematurely.¹³⁹

While teachers are shadowy figures in Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, the protagonist is a powerful character who finds the required resources within herself. Judy thinks that admonitions to evince womanly characteristics are as outdated as Fordyce's *Sermons* and Mr Collins are seen to be in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In contrast to the earlier heroines, Webster's chief character shows a greater tendency towards individual perspectives and commitments, striking an equilibrium between feminine characteristics and human self-reliance. That combination is even more salient in the portrait of an alumna, Sallie in *Dear Enemy*.¹⁴⁰

Education and woman's predicament

Throughout *The Princess*, women look upon education as the means to achieve changes. For Princess Ida, access to advanced learning is important primarily for the possibilities it offers in the way of mental growth and the attaining of equality with men. If girls were educated, men and women would eventually rise together. In Tennyson's text her dream is blocked and cannot yet materialize.

Characters related to Tennyson's imagined students express their views on higher education for women. Their opinions range from Ida's conviction that education will release young women out of slavery and foolishness to other people's horror of what education might result in: women questioning the *status quo* in the relations between the sexes. Both parties are prepared to

¹³⁸ The quotation is from Talbot's book, 1910/1978, 225.

¹³⁹ See, for instance, Schwartz, 1899, 60–80; Daskam, *Smith*, 151–201; and Cook, 143–86.

¹⁴⁰ Webster, *Dear Enemy* (NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1915).

fight: Ida for women's right to develop, and the king for women's obligation to subordinate themselves. The princess is not inclined to marry, feeling no responsibility for the pledge made in the proxy-wedding when she was eight; her enterprise, which aims at liberating women, demands her full attention. Conversely, the king rhetorically explains his contention that the lots of women and men must inevitably differ:¹⁴¹

Man is the hunter; woman is his game:
The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,
We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;
They love us for it, and we ride them down.
... but this is fixt
As are the roots of earth and base of all;
Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion.

The three women in command of the university in *The Princess* argue that access to academic training would strengthen female students' self-esteem, preparing them to question the view that men and women belong in different spheres. Opposing their contention, the king insists that his well-ordered universe must remain intact. He interprets attempts by the women to attain equality as an attack on men's position, and this is clearly his main reason for being violently against the educational experiment:¹⁴²

... we hear
You hold the woman is the better man;
A rampant heresy, such as if it spread
Would make all women kick against their Lords
Through all the world ...

Even Ida's faithful brother acknowledges that the other king and his son have a legitimate claim on the princess; in addition, it is apparent that the power of the prince's father is sufficiently great to threaten her university. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the effect of Ida's efforts – that men's sovereign power and peace of mind would be disturbed – has close affinities with that found in the petulant remarks expressed by uncles in *Two College Girls* who comment on their niece's college expectations; in both cases the men take on comical dimensions when they spell out what is basically wrong with women's higher education.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Tennyson, V: 147–50; 435–41. See 'equal husbandry' I:126, 'equal might and rights' IV:56, 'equal rights' VII: 218.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, IV: 390–94.

¹⁴³ Brown, 1886, 18–19.

'The women, you see,' continued Uncle Lemuel, 'the women are getting pretty high-spirited, as you might say.'

...

'If we don't look sharp, Iry, they'll be getting the upper hand.'

'You can't reason with 'em,' said Uncle Ira, with his mouth a little too full of cake to make the utterance impressive. 'Send 'em to college, and where'll they want to go next?'

Such a dialogue illustrates and confirms the presence of an element which may well be called political in college fiction: Brown shows that arguments against academic education for girls frequently boiled down to male anxiety that female students might be 'getting the upper hand'. At the senior dinner in Goodloe's collection, the new graduates respond 'with an awkward and significant silence' to a speech which conveys a similar message, though it is veiled in beguiling phrases. The male speaker not only professes to be in two minds about higher education for women; he also goes on to maintain that since life 'is so rich in experience for woman – so much richer and fuller for woman than for man', he trembles 'at this violent reaction from nature to art' which college education for women implies.¹⁴⁴ The 'awkward and significant silence' vibrates with what are apparently mixed feelings; the man represents the society into which the young women are to return, and in which they are widely expected to accept their 'natural' duties at the expense of their hard-earned scholarly skills.

The ending of Brown's novel of 1886 implies that higher education can constitute both a platform for new challenges, the way it is for Rosamund, and a goal in itself for a girl who like Edna is the first in her lower-middle-class and countryside family to go to college. Although her dedication and diligence make her the more successful student of the two main characters, her academic degree is evidently a great enough achievement. Apart from meeting the moral obligation of paying off what she believes to be scholarships from college, she expresses no further professional ambitions. On Commencement, the main protagonist is shown to have benefited from an academic education which has successfully integrated a graduate into the female class destined to care and set a good example for family and society. As she is going to marry Rosamund's brother Jack, no other orientation would prove fruitful; Jack has been reading Herbert Spencer who postulated that though women's intellect might be superior to men's, their 'maternal functions' would suffer from extensive use of it. Inspiring no professional ambition, Edna's college studies have given her a wider understanding of what learning is; but, more importantly, they have also made her familiar

¹⁴⁴ Goodloe, 1895, 'As Told by Her', 76–77. The scene is referred to in other contexts in the section called 'Head-heart' above.

with the standards of conduct and social capability that women were expected to meet.¹⁴⁵

Despite the crudeness of Tennyson's hostile king, he personifies many of the ideas about gendered spheres which were around in late-nineteenth-century North American society. The characters in a Bryn Mawr story illustrate his ideas in a comical way. One mother considers college to be a place of depravity and dangerously advanced ideas; a suitor finds that college girls generally 'make a lot of trouble'; and the junior protagonist initially claims that her mind is more important than her emotions. Planning her refusal to a marriage proposal, the girl rehearses how she is going to accuse her suitor of harbouring an attitude similar to the king's views in the following words: 'I suppose you consider it woman's place to – bask in your radiance'.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, she finally decides to marry the young man, breaking off her college career prematurely and giving up her unrealistic literary ambitions. Even though she has proved herself to be a clever student, she allows her 'heart' to win over her 'head' and professional ambition, a conversion which resembles that of Princess Ida.

In *Across the Campus*, two men discuss women's education and its possible repercussions on woman's traditional place in society. One part of that dialogue is quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Young Professor Burton appreciates the 'many-sidedness' gained at college, which in his view makes the students more womanly. Dr Comstock is more practical, worrying that the new interests will make the girls 'indifferent to the old-fashioned womanly interests'.¹⁴⁷ As in several college stories, the 'many-sidedness' is shown to include at least two compulsory elements: a love of children, and filial responsibilities. A girl can 'make herself her own', learn and be what she wants, as long as those characteristics are not harmed. They are certainly related, too, to what the prince sees as 'distinctive womanhood' in *The Princess*.¹⁴⁸

College stories contain several events which make daughters feel the burden of their family's claim: the daughter is obliged to discharge duties to all members of her family. In Fuller's novel one student has to leave to take care of her sick mother, and Christine's old friend struggles with her conscience, wondering whether she has let down her mother (who is not said to be in ill health) by leaving her. Similarly, when Christine's mother is unwell, the doctor emphasizes how she will gain strength again with the care that 'only a daughter' can give.¹⁴⁹ Christine hence gives up her planned trip to France in

¹⁴⁵ Brown, 1886, 324.

¹⁴⁶ *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'Catherine's Career', 205–35 (208).

¹⁴⁷ Fuller, 266–69.

¹⁴⁸ Tennyson, VII: 257.

¹⁴⁹ Fuller, 276, 201, and 419.

order to be with her mother. Several stories show female students suffering greater distress than Fuller's protagonist in similar situations. In *Anne's House of Dreams*, Leslie Moore, née West, had a head 'chock full of brains', but she gave up her hopes of college studies for an unfortunate marriage to help her mother out of economic straits. Gifted Sara in *Vassar Studies* has to make a similar decision. She takes her studies more seriously than her friends. Although she claims that as a girl you must learn 'the duty to yourself, not to your family', she is nevertheless abruptly forced to give up her studies and care for her troubled family. The letter inducing her to take this decision is from her brother Harry. It shows that although there are brothers at home who might take on her burden, they will not do so. The letter ends flippantly: 'I say, Sis, come home, and let your old career go to smash'.¹⁵⁰

A similarly incapable brother is found in a serialized story about a mother who falls ill after the daughter has graduated. The family takes it for granted that the college girl will take on all responsibilities of the home. Although this story indicates that the girl Barbara helped out with some of these chores before college, her brother, at this point preparing for college, is not used to regarding them as being his responsibilities; nor is he willing to do his part in the present situation.¹⁵¹

Brown's Edna expects that the training of her mind will enrich her life by giving her higher things to live for. The heroine of *Anne of Avonlea* puts similar thoughts into these words: 'What I want to get out of my college course is some knowledge of the best way of living life and doing the most and best with it'. Every college book contains one or more characters whose ambitions resemble Anne's. That a solid and qualifying education would help women act for the good of society is a run-of-the-mill feature from *Two College Girls* to Montgomery's Anne-tales. At a first glance, this ambition does seem to agree with the views of Tennyson's old king and the classic womanly traits of domesticity, piety, and purity. When Judy remodels the plot in *Hamlet* to suit her own preferences, for instance by making Ophelia the main character, she adheres to similar tenets: 'I keep Hamlet amused all the time, and pet him and scold him and make him wrap up his throat when he has a cold. I've entirely cured him of being melancholy ... He takes care of the governing and I look after the charities.' Judy's fantasy anticipates the ending of Webster's novel a hundred pages later on.¹⁵² Nevertheless, aspirations geared towards 'charities' actually imply the new professional field which women were turning to. In *Dear Enemy* issues such as professional work, leadership, argumen-

¹⁵⁰ Montgomery, 1919/1992, 72; Schwartz, 1899, 282–84.

¹⁵¹ Marian Kent Hurd and Jean Bingham Wilson, 'When She Came Home from College. A Story of an American Home', *LHJ*, May 1909, 11, 12, 78, 79; June 1909, 13, 14, 48; July 1909, 16, 42, 43.

¹⁵² Montgomery, 1909/1997, 522; Webster, 1912/1995, 84.

tation, a living wage, and marriage combined with dedicated, advanced work are expressly addressed when an initially reluctant society woman is placed in charge of an orphanage.

Webster emphasized that it was college that provided her protagonist Sallie McBride (and Sallie's graduate friends) with the adequate knowledge, skills, and training she needs to cope with the massive undertaking of reorganizing a charity institution, of braving the opposition she faces in the course of that venture, and of arguing in favour of her decisions. My next chapter looks at how that multifarious preparation for occupational life after college – a liberal-arts education at a residential college – is presented in women's college fiction.

4

Campus life and the academic experience

The social side of college life is composed of incidents which have absolutely no connection with each other; and while the centre of the circle is the intellectual life, which grows steadily, beautifully, and well, the tangents may be anything from blue prints to sociological reforms.

Caroline Macomber Fuller, *Across the Campus* (1899/1932), 266.

Back in the 1860s and 70s, the question was whether women should be allowed to go to college at all. For obvious reasons, that obstacle is not prominent in college narratives: after all, the characters are already college students. One of the story-writers in *Bryn Mawr Stories* made her character triumphantly claim that the question concerning women and higher education is settled because, in her words, the simple answer is ‘yes, because they *will* [go to college]’.¹ College girls and narrators generally agree with that contention, claiming that college is democratic and a place for all, irrespective of class, domicile, or financial circumstances. Anyone who really wants to study can do so.² Nevertheless, the confident Bryn Mawr opinion is occasionally contested, not least by the way in which college stories present the fate of those who prove poorly prepared for higher education intellectually, socially, and/or economically – and of those who, even more importantly, lack the relevant aptitude and attitude. The new impediments that women face in the academic environment which has become available to them are the intellectual demands they encounter and the problems that campus life occasionally creates.

The most apparent failure depicted in college fiction is of course when a student drops out of the education because she does not pass her examina-

¹ Morris/Congdon, eds, *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 267.

² Ruth in *Elinor's College Career* (Schwartz, 1906, 63) emphasizes something that is rarely acknowledged in college fiction. Knowing what it is like to yearn and strive for an education, she points out to her spoilt and lazy friends that many girls hunger in vain for exactly the opportunities that the two students are neglecting; she regards their attitude as both ‘treacherous’ and ‘wicked’. Schwartz repeated that message in her next novel, *Beatrice Leigh at College*, ‘Victory’, 321–38 (338).

tions; that is not, however, a common event. An interrupted education is generally due to financial difficulties or to the 'family claim', the girl's mother needing assistance at home. Serious trouble for a student in a college story is more apt to involve unhappiness on campus. One example is the miserable loner who does not find, or is not offered, a place among the undergraduates – a sad fate particularly often addressed in the short stories. At times such a girl is described as a genius who either does not fall into line with the other girls or avoids systematic studying because she is not inspired by the ways in which seminars are conducted.

Characters and narrators frequently stress that whether a college education is successful or not depends on a just balance between time devoted to academic work and time spent on other activities provided on campus. In the words of a senior advising a freshman, students do their work 'about forty times better if [they] do something else as well.'³ (In Fuller's and Schwartz's novels, that 'something else' must in fact be interpreted as meaning 'extra work', impecunious students managing admirably.) This balance is a fundamental theme in college narratives.⁴ In the stories printed before Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, faculty members and fellow students make undergraduates realize their inadequacies in either field, whereas the latter novel contains a protagonist who discovers her shortcomings on her own and finds means to dispose of them, too. Judy hence epitomizes the democratic idea that is expressed in the Bryn Mawr story mentioned earlier: college is for anyone who wants that intellectual education. At the same time, Webster – herself a graduate – showed where a great problem for a student with a background such as Judy's lay when she provided her character with a substantial economic basis.

An education in democracy

Tennyson's poem *The Princess*, which serves as a literary frame of reference for the present study, focuses on an educational institution in which the protagonists are royals. The six hundred student 'maidens' innocently dressed in white form an anonymous, compliant group; so do the broad-faced and sturdy 'daughters of the plough'.⁵ The adjectives used about the members of the two groups indicate a distinction between manual and intellectual labour. In

³ *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'A Diplomatic Crusade', 259–95 (271). Freshmen, this student states, ought to be informed about the benefits of that balance; 274. See, too, Gallaher, 'In the Matter of Roommates', 3–40 (39); Daskam, *Smith*, 'Bisquits ex Machina', 85–119, and 'A Family Affair', 151–201.

⁴ However, the crammed time-table which might ensue for an ordinary student in the wake of the various claims she faces is elaborated on in Daskam, 1904/1970, 'The Point of View', 139–64.

⁵ Tennyson, II: 448, IV: 528–32.

the poem, hierarchy is not disputed; Princess Ida may confer with her ladies, for instance, but she is the absolute ruler of her society. For obvious reasons, no aspects of democracy are in evidence there.

In progressive-era America, articles and fiction offering information about women's colleges were dotted with references to 'democracy', the term being used in its political as well as its socio-economic sense. A lecturer in *Two College Girls* who mentions – as a matter of fact – that a student will learn 'some wholesome democratic lessons' simply because she is at college expresses an opinion which is typical in women's college fiction; the statement suggests both how accepted the conception was and how vague.⁶ Sherrie A. Inness arrived at a similar conclusion: during this period it was fashionable in 'educational rhetoric' to claim that American schools and colleges were particularly 'democratic'.⁷ College stories often focus on two aspects of democracy – the political one, according to which they should have a say in matters which affect them, and the social one, according to which students' individual character and achievement are what matters. When I discuss these issues here, it should be borne in mind that college-story characters – with a few exceptions – belong to the group of Americans who are usually termed WASPs.⁸

Implicit in 'democracy' lies the notion that all people ought to be treated as equals, regardless of their origin, status, or position. As was pointed out in chapter one, several college-story introductions stress the possibility for other girls than those born with silver spoons in their mouths to take part in a college education; and some college-story writers clearly took pains to include characters from different social, economic, and geographic backgrounds. These dissimilarities are emphasized by both characters and narrators. In *Elinor's College Career*, for instance, a number of girls gather in Lydia's room; their divergent backgrounds are specified. Similarly, the narrator in *College Girls* maintains that the student body is 'heterogeneous' and made up of 'New York society girls and missionaries' daughters from India, and Boston Latin-school girls, and native Japanese, and Westerners and Georgians and Australians and "Teacher Specials," and very young preparatory-school girls'. In the collection, however, we do not encounter – for instance – any 'Japanese'.

Sherrie A. Inness has investigated some issues raised in college-girl stories, looking particularly at impoverished characters and the ways in which

⁶ Brown, 1886, 112.

⁷ Sherrie A. Inness, *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in Women's College Fiction 1895-1910* (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 113.

⁸ One student in the Molly Brown series books is Japanese; she is fondly adopted by the protagonist and her friends. See Nell Speed (Samson), *Molly Brown's Sophomore Days* (NY: Hurst, 1912).

they are represented. According to Inness, the only reason for including them was a desire to conceal the fact that 'class' did matter at college; thus fiction was to sustain the idea that 'any girl with enough ambition' could indeed be integrated into the women's colleges. In her view, the authors' intention failed; poor girls either drop out or learn to accept that a subordinate position is indicated for them.⁹ Interestingly, though, most of her examples are taken from girls' series, in which snobbery is an important – indeed often the only – theme. Student poverty as such in women's stories seldom determines the way in which a girl is regarded; in fact, undergraduates who work their way through college are often highly appreciated by various students as personalities in their own right.

Inness's contention that poor college girls were only respected if they knew their place¹⁰ is refuted in, for instance, *Elinor's College Career*, in which poor student Ruth retains the traits which initially exasperate socially well-educated Elinor. Actually, the latter girl is the one seen to change for the better, and because of her acquaintance with Ruth. Similarly, characters in *Across the Campus* who have to work their way through college are great assets in the social and academic development of a haughty protagonist, Christine. One of them calmly states that Christine's laziness degrades her, categorizing her as belonging to 'a certain class of people' – a statement which does not bespeak humility. By showing impatience when Christine does not bother to accept good advice, the penniless student, who sews gym suits to support herself, does not indicate any sense of social inferiority.¹¹

One *College Girls* story illustrates the consequences of the wrong attitude to differences. An Iowa student is 'of a social class that [another student] was not in the habit of mingling with away from college'. Feeling superior, the snob draws a 'narrow line of distinction' – an arrogant stance for which she is eventually seen to pay a price. In the main, however, individual merits rather than social status constitute the determining factors in college narratives. For instance, the protagonist who felt superior in *Across the Campus* learns from experience that 'if she [wishes] to have a place in this new world she must earn it' by her own merits and efforts. In general, girls in these stories are elected to posts and into societies because they are considered to possess good qualities, not specifically because their origin is felt to be prestigious.¹²

Four years after the publication of *College Girls*, students in *Vassar Stories*

⁹ Inness, 111–44 (113 and 112). For the contemporaneous uses of 'democracy', she refers to Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 62–68.

¹⁰ Inness, 120.

¹¹ Fuller, 41, 55, and 62.

¹² Goodloe, 1895, 'A Short Study in Evolution', 225–42 (227–28) and 231; Fuller, 56.

discuss whether their college is 'democratic'. The adjective is used in a discussion among students about the significance of undergraduate status, whether it should be independent of breeding, wealth, or domicile. Those who tend towards the view that such matters are indeed irrelevant refer to the close fellowship between a wealthy student and a poor one. As this relationship suggests that the rich young woman cares neither for money nor for position, the narrator partly confirms that opinion. However, those who adopt the contrary position retort that the wealthy girl is very choosy when it comes to friends, not deigning to talk with most girls in her 'class'. It takes cleverness and/or ladylike behaviour, acquired in an environment with refined ancestors, to be accepted in her well-chosen clique, they claim. Though poor, the impecunious student, her close friend, meets these demands. The plot eventually answers the query about democracy. Without considering whether she has a lady's upbringing or is a popular undergraduate, Vassar-trained students find the girl best qualified for the office of president, trusting her to look after their common interests.¹³ That scene emphasizes what is apparent in college fiction: a girl's behaviour and attitude determine her position at college.

The two characters mentioned in Goodloe's and Gallaher's books are said to assess other students according to how and where they grew up. In *Daddy-Long-Legs*, Webster included another typical 'lady' student as a room-mate of Judy's. The story never expounds Julia Pendleton's opinions of other students, but Judy describes how Julia is anxious to know about her background: the New York 'aristocrat' needs to acquire some bearings concerning a girl with whom she has been forced to have quite a close relationship. However, Judy's rendering of the questioning exhibits the superficiality of her interrogator.¹⁴ Gallaher's 'lady' discussed above is explicitly said to suffer from 'a narrow life and an unimaginative nature',¹⁵ and Judy's interpretation of Julia's personality implicitly conveys the same message. The three stories in *College Girls*, *Vassar Stories*, and *Daddy-Long-Legs* express similar views of students who have a limited outlook on their fellow undergraduates. Sherrie A. Inness argues that class boundaries are neither subverted nor questioned in college fiction, but shown to be 'natural'.¹⁶ I do not agree: it seems obvious to me that Goodloe, Gallaher, and Webster challenge these boundaries, albeit in different ways. Generally speaking, I have found college stories to be imbued with the message that college should be democratic, in the sense that students ought to be treated equally. To be sure, some fic-

¹³ 'The Clan' in Gallaher, 165–217.

¹⁴ Webster, *Daddy-Long-Legs*, 37.

¹⁵ Gallaher, 174.

¹⁶ Inness, 125.

tional students find it difficult to adopt that view; but their opinion is not presented as a laudable one.

In 1900 *Smith College Stories* made use of the oft-repeated tale of opposing experiences related to on the one hand a popular student, with a secure self-esteem acquired in an encouraging home environment, and on the other her foil who lacks that feeling and background. The latter student's father owns a struggling confectionery shop; her mother and sisters are not interested in education at all. Both students bear the name of Susan, which accounts for some crucial mix-ups. The well-bred one, called Sue, is characterized as 'distinctly democratic' and seen to blend perfectly into the campus atmosphere. The other Susan is ill at ease in the educational environment because of her unpolished upbringing. Filled with envy at Sue's being so easily part of it all, she fails to adjust to campus life, socially as well as academically. Nevertheless, she is recommended for the editorship of the college paper, a highly coveted position among the girls. She proves equal to that challenging task, which paves the way for Sue's subsequent arrangement in the course of which the poor student is offered a good position with a Boston publishing firm whose management belongs to Sue's own personal network. Susan never learns about the intervention. Although she does not feel at home in college, Susan thus benefits from it. Her years there open up a future for her which would have been impossible even to dream of back home. Despite the fact that she makes no efforts to contribute to the college atmosphere, her abilities are nevertheless acknowledged in an environment in which students learn to appreciate and admire what is achieved rather than where and how a girl was brought up. The well-told story thus suggests that college may be a good option even for a student who fails to blend into the campus atmosphere.¹⁷

'Submerged' in *Wellesley Stories* paints a bleak picture of insensitive college girls with no commitment to democratic ideals.¹⁸ Wellesley College, depicted on the frontispiece of the volume, had not allowed any introduction of self-government among its students, a circumstance which may be seen in conjunction with the lack of responsibility evinced by several college girls in the book.¹⁹ This particular story will also be discussed below in the section called 'Coping with studies'.

Viewed in relation to my finding that college fiction usually depicts the inclusion of various kinds of students into the student body, this particular narrative shows what happens when college fails in that respect. One reason

¹⁷ Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Family Affair', 151–201 (151).

¹⁸ Cook, 'Submerged', 143–86.

¹⁹ Louise Sheffield Brownell Saunders, 'Government of Women Students in Colleges and Universities', *Educational Review*, December 1900, 475–98 (491).

why the 'submerged' girl has such an unhappy college experience is that she is left painfully on her own: a kind student who is also of slender means becomes her only friend. Another is that many students make fun of her in a cruel way. The absence of general support may partly account for her lack of stamina and tenacity, however. Webster's Judy is her opposite in this respect, a girl who works hard to compensate for her educational disadvantages. When she is laughed at, she makes great efforts in order to avoid further reactions of that kind.

The earlier collection *College Girls* features a character who grew up in a place which is as unusual in college stories as Judy's orphanage and the *Wellesley Stories* girl's working-class environment: it is described by her father as 'a minin' camp in Colorado – Boulder Bluff wuz its name. Awfully lonesome place. No schools – nothin', jest the store'.²⁰ The rendering of his speech underscores the daughter's rough upbringing. We learn in passing, however, that she has been prepared at a boarding school. Struggling passably through college, her main problem is that she does not belong to the group of outstandingly bright undergraduates. That awareness, however, she shares with many characters; it is not particularly connected to her background.

Like many fictional fathers, the Colorado storekeeper in *College Girls* expects some results from his daughter's college education: the idea is for her to become famous. Whether that expectation is based on her chances of becoming learned or on the advantages of moving in refined environments is difficult to say. Jean Webster actually used the idea of class mobility by allowing Judy of entirely unknown origin in *Daddy-Long-Legs* to associate with Sallie, whose self-made, competent father secured a wealthy background for her, and with Julia, who prides herself on her ancestry. Judy makes the following comment on this arrangement: 'This is a democratic country.' The matron of Judy's orphanage points out how singularly her protégée's immediate future has changed her prospects in life: 'Not many girls in your position ever have such an opportunity to rise in the world'.²¹ That is a reasonable statement; but democracy has little to do with Judy's being able to go college in the first place.

College fiction contains few instances of characters reflecting on socioeconomic differences in society; one is, however, found in *Two College Girls*. When the seniors take part in an autumnal tramp, one of them notices 'those poor people left behind on the wharf [who] look so brown and rusty and hard-working'. She knows that she often holds up her own 'happiness

²⁰ Goodloe, 1895, 'The Genius of Boulder Bluff', 243–66 (252).

²¹ Webster, 1912/1995, 69 and 9–10.

against somebody's misery'; in this particular case, she says that the scene she refers to constitutes a drab background to her own advantageous position, which indicates some awareness of social injustice. The other students, however, do not engage in a discussion comparing the diverse lots of people in the same nation: they evade the remark by pointing to her admirable application of aesthetics, in which background is necessary. The incident stresses the way in which students notice but do not problematize the notion of 'us' versus 'them'. Decades later freshman Judy reacts strongly against an undemocratic opinion in the same vein, delivered by a bishop in *Daddy-Long-Legs*. But then she knows what it is like to be part of that background.²² On that early occasion, her reaction is immediate and emotional. In the course of her education, as we will see, she learns to reflect and analyse.

From a political point of view, college-story writers took pains to describe the ways in which general rules for meeting and voting procedures were practised.²³ Those nuts and bolts of democracy feature in elections within the fictional communities, during class meetings, and in societies as well as when important posts are to be filled, for instance on the editorial board of the college paper. Though alumnae could apply such knowledge in women's clubs and committees, they were not allowed to do so in general elections. In *Daddy-Long-Legs*, the protagonist points out that the nation wasted 'honest, educated, conscientious, intelligent' inhabitants by not allowing them to vote, that is to function as citizens.²⁴ Even though she makes the remark in a good-humoured manner, the point is made.

Whereas story-writers emphasized students' willingness to accept, and capacity to take on, responsibility for decisions agreed on in a democratic fashion, several narratives question the predominant system of undergraduate participation in college affairs at a higher level. Particularly in those written by Vassarites, the sub-text makes it clear that democracy in that sense is a sham. Webster, for one, exemplified how the ideas about solidarity which the protagonist listens to during a lecture in sociology collide with school reality in her tale about Patty at boarding-school. Not yet a college student, the girl pupil tries to apply what she has learnt. Her attempt at implementing a democratic stance fails, however. The narrator makes no comment on the

²² Brown, 1886, 244–45; Webster, 1912/1995, 23.

²³ See, for instance, the four college novels and Cook, 'President Jefferson', 3–39 (34); Schwartz, 1899, 'The History of an Ambition', 27–59 (53); and 'A Case of Interference' in Daskam, *Smith*, 37–64.

²⁴ Webster, 1912/1995, 127 and 148. Comments on women's suffrage are not common in college stories. One resembling Webster's is made when students impersonate suffragettes in a role play; they are typically, albeit good-humouredly, sent out of the hall by other students acting as officers of police. See Christina Catrevas, *That Freshman* (NY: D. Appleton, 1910), 141–152. In *Smith*, Daskam included another, similarly ambivalent, comment: a senior, doing a 'stunt', delivers a lecture on votes for women. The narrator gives voice to the spectators who apparently regard the speech as a parody and the role as that of an old and 'horrible' woman; 'A Few Diversions', 205–43 (238–39).

implications of the heroine's lack of success, but the incident demonstrates how hypocrisy prevails. Although her experience is a negative one, it is at school that Patty has her first lessons in democracy, learning the idealized version in theory as well as experiencing the frustrating implementation in practice.²⁵

For one of the four protagonists in *Elinor's College Career*, 'democracy' is similarly found to be a spurious notion. Lydia has chosen academic studies in a female environment because of its alleged democratic ambience; there she expects to meet with less conventional and 'mercenary' attitudes than those prevailing in society at large. Her trust in democracy at women's colleges is immense and she lectures freshmen about it. Testing the applicability of the concept in its political sense, however, she finds that the reality is a different story; the self-government that the students are granted turns out to mean that they must unconditionally choose to abide by orders emanating from the faculty. A unanimous student petition, logically structured by Lydia and supported by the other students, is seen to carry little weight when a college decision is at hand. She is made indignantly aware of the distance between principle and practice when the faculty categorically turns the proposal of a college uniform down. Though a student uniform would counteract inequality on campus, faculty members will not listen. They use 'democracy' as a pretext when claiming that the gown would deepen the division between students and 'the outside world'. After this eye-opener, Lydia claims that incidents come 'trooping to range themselves upon her side in her defiance of a paternalistic government.' Outraged, she rebels.²⁶ Lydia's busy-body characteristics are benevolently smiled at by the narrator and by other fictional college girls, and her insurgence leads to her falling ill. (See the section on 'Propensities for academic work' below.) But even though the text does not endorse student rebellion, it certainly illustrates attempts made by students to gain influence on life at college and the resistance they encounter in the process. Jean Webster used the same device when boarding-schoolgirl Patty attempts to apply what she learnt about human rights in *Just Patty* (1911).

Caroline M. Fuller wrote in *Across the Campus* that 'a committee [was] chosen from the four classes to represent the undergraduates at Faculty meetings'. What that committee actually achieves is never referred to. In other stories, rules that have first been decided over the girls' heads are then to be administered by students who have no say in the matter. The result is tedious chores, illustrated in *When Patty Went to College*, where a character sighs over

²⁵ 'The Virgil Strike' in Webster, 1911/1915, 55–78.

²⁶ Schwartz, 1906, 19 and 136–53 (136 and 139).

her often futile reminders to freshmen about missing-chapel excuses and library books, which form part of her responsibilities as president of all the students. In the same vein, a junior in *Beatrice Leigh at College* persuades a shy freshman to accept the dull duties of a corridor warden, who should for instance uphold 'a certain degree of quiet' among the lodgers. They are all obligations which form part of a teacher's duties in *Two College Girls* – obligations which the faculty member dreads. Although the more experienced student in Schwartz's book labels their college 'a democratic place', her choice of an insecure newcomer for this responsibility ironically testifies to a general lack of student interest in inflicted and unrewarding tasks.²⁷

Student participation is understandably seen to be slack in chores that are solely intended to uphold social control and exert public service for what students have been told to regard as 'the good of the community'. An amusing example of student involvement and its result is seen in *Daddy-Long-Legs*. When the 'Self-Government Association' abolishes the ten o'clock rule, the pleasure of breaking what was imposed on the students is gone. Therefore, they no longer stay up late, but mature from eager law-breakers into individuals doing what they admit is good for them. For Judy and others that means going to bed when they are tired, which is in fact shown to be earlier than the 'lights-out' rule had prescribed.²⁸

College fiction often discusses 'democracy', both in the sense of genuine responsibility and awareness and in the hollow sense of performing executive duties for the student body. If the concept is extended to imply the fair treatment of every individual, on the basis of her individual merits, the picture is less clear-cut. Certainly, equality among college girls, irrespective of origin, is generally held up as desirable and/or achieved by the writer, the narrator, or the odd student. At times, however, it is undermined or obstructed by student attitudes brought out in the stories, which makes it apparent that women college writers of the period were aware of the discrepancy between ideals and reality. Still, the texts strongly suggest that every individual should be allowed to prove her own worth, irrespective of her parentage. Those who rely on other criteria when assessing their fellow students tend not to be the winners in the end. It is evident that college-story writers in general wished to stress the idea of college as a kind of melting-pot in which nobody should be excluded, where girls from dissimilar backgrounds would meet and influence one another, and where young women could learn to take part in democratic processes. The moralizing on such matters found in early works by women college-story writers gradually gave way to the

²⁷ Fuller, 188; Webster, 1903, 'Patty and the Bishop', 257–280 (275); Schwartz, 1907, 'Enter Robbie Bell', 35–58 (35–36); Brown, 1886, 103.

²⁸ Webster, 1912/1995, 164.

humour and mild irony which Webster used so successfully when presenting college life and attitudes in society at large to a general readership.

Prerequisites for success at college

Brown's *Two College Girls* paints a poignant picture of the main character's chaotic entrance into college, which must have been enlightening information for educationally inexperienced readers in the 1880s. Dreaming of it at home, small-town girl Edna is in great awe of the institution. For her, it constitutes a place where her 'mind' will somehow benefit. Back home, few people would know anything about such an environment or its aims and values; her idea of college originates from a supportive high-school teacher. Any girl contemplating higher education would of course study college prospectuses with her parents; but the narrator discloses that fictional stories have been especially instrumental in providing the coveted information for Brown's protagonist. It transpires that such fiction may not be the most reliable source of information for the step she is taking. That reminder should have served as useful information at the time. Schwartz included the same warning in *Elinor's College Career*; in Myra's case, however, it was her appetite for frolics that was whetted by such reading whereas the stories Edna knew almost by heart actually left her ill-prepared for the practical, intellectual, and social problems in store for her.²⁹ She is therefore in for several unpleasant surprises, beginning on her arrival when her college dreams are marred by problems concerning where she might sleep. Brown emphasized the great step Edna takes by dwelling on the length of her journey from home. The weary student is perplexed when she finds that worldly matters do not take care of themselves, as they presumably did in the narratives she enjoyed.³⁰

This first college story, *Two College Girls*, describes the ordeal of examinations determining which 'class' each girl may enter. The account of these examinations supplies information about the degrees of the fictional students' preparatory education. Graduates of the public schools set to work in a businesslike manner, evidently having been suitably prepared. The opposite is implied where ladies' seminaries are concerned. While one mother expects her daughter to go right into junior education because of the 'excellent' pre-education she had received in such a seminary, the girl does not

²⁹ Edna's 'wide acquaintance with story-book heroines [which] gave her ample precedent for the plunge she was taking' may refer to the existence of women's college stories before 1886, but I have not been able to find any; Brown, 1886, 27–28. In *Elinor's College Career* Myra has had access to college stories. But in her next novel, Schwartz mentioned boarding-school stories as creating expectations of larks at college; Schwartz, 1907, 'A Wave of Reform', 115–44 (122). This piece of information is significant; the characters, setting, and plots of the loosely connected stories in *Beatrice Leigh at College* are clearly intended to satisfy a young readership.

³⁰ Brown, 1886, 17 and 27–28.

understand what to do and breaks down, finally qualifying for the beginners' class.³¹ Edna has enthusiastically worked her way through 'high school'; consequently, her admirable achievements put her in the sophomore class.³²

In the second – with regard to chronology – college novel that I have studied in depth, *Across the Campus*, Fuller shows what anybody who was ever a newcomer in an institution of this kind will recognize: confusion prevails during the first few weeks, when schedules prove a mystery; the girls burst in on the wrong classes, and they think they will never become familiar with the different houses and their names.³³ As in most college stories, initially terrifying feelings of chaos are soon seen to subside in a comforting manner.

Whether a fictional student is going to enjoy and benefit from her years in higher education is shown to depend primarily on four factors: basic knowledge allowing her to cope with advanced studies; a willingness to work – in academic contexts, coupled with an awareness of study skills, and in other campus activities, coupled with an acceptance of responsibility; a capacity to associate with people of various kinds;³⁴ and financial means. Even though they made students comment indignantly on the issue of women's cerebral capacities in comparison with men's, women writers thus focused on other, and certainly more relevant, prerequisites for success at college in their fiction. Some characters in the short stories fail to adapt to college life because of their various inadequacies in these respects, whereas protagonists in the novels are shown to overcome them. In the case of Fuller's complex character Ardis, interestingly, the narrator points to another flaw. As a young girl she was given uncensored access to free reading at home, without any guidance. These texts provided the girl with abstract ideals. Because she was not ready for philosophical doctrines, she does not fully grasp them but applies them uncritically.³⁵ Implicitly, *Across the Campus* thus conveys the message that learning should be structured by capable adults, parents as well as teachers. Apart from an apparent lack of responsibility, Ardis does not seem to be wanting in respect of any of the requirements mentioned above. The reason why she does not choose to stay to the end is that college has made her realize the consequences of her egocentric

³¹ Lydia's education is similarly said not to have been 'eminently severe' in Schwartz, 1906, 60–61; Daskam implied that the same was true about certain boarding-schools in Smith, 'The Education of Elizabeth', 123–147 (128 and 135). Nevertheless, parents praise the academic standards at those institutions. See also Goodloe, 1895, 'The Genius of Bowlder Bluff', 254–55.

³² Brown, 1886, 32–36 and 14.

³³ Fuller, 21–23.

³⁴ It is even claimed that success depends on what room-mate a student is placed with: Gallaher, 'In the Matter of Roommates', 3–39 (28).

³⁵ Fuller, 31.

actions. Ardis's fate consequently emphasizes the importance of that guidance and influence which education and campus life were meant to provide, even though it takes almost four years before they have any decisive impact on her. In general, however, college stories point to other problematic areas: academic studies and financial means.

Coping with studies

College stories abound in references to the sheer amount of intellectual labour that college girls are faced with, and generally learn to cope with after an initial frightening experience of the kind which a Schwartz character illustrates in a poem reading as follows:³⁶

They told her not to worry,
Nor sit up to cram,
Nor feel a sense of hurry
In taking her exam.
And so she did not worry,
Nor study hard, nor cram,
Nor feel a sense of hurry –
And she failed in her exam!

A fictional student generally manages her scholarly assignments at college fairly well, provided that she has been given qualified preparation.³⁷ Particularly if she needs her exam for further, professional aims, she is usually successful. The author may orchestrate events so that she encounters girls who are not so lucky because they lack a congenial intellectual and social background.³⁸ Unless they meet with sympathy and proper assistance from some student or teacher, they cannot continue their education. Such a girl must have some asset to attract attention, though. One example is a girl who grew up in Italy and was educated by her father. Lonely and ill at ease at college, she fails in several examinations because she has not cracked the code on how to manage them. Similarly she is unsuccessful during recitations in class. The interest of another student and an instructor is kindled because they love Italy.³⁹ In this respect, Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs* again stands out from the other college stories: it implies that the girl who sets her mind to it can work wonders if she is able to analyse how best to catch up and then studies accordingly.

³⁶ Schwartz, 1906, 55.

³⁷ Webster, 1911/1915, says something about how her first protagonist Patty was prepared at her boarding-school, for instance in essay- and formal writing, Latin and French, mathematics, and biology. Sociology is an interesting subject in which she listens to lectures on Woman's Rights, but also learns that theories are difficult to apply in daily life. Her frequent disobedience is shown to be due to boredom.

³⁸ See, for instance, 'A Family Affair' in Daskam, *Smith*, 151–201; and Goodloe, 1895, 'A Short Career', 97–105.

³⁹ Webster, 1903, 'Per l'Italia', 149–76. That story contains the only specification in college fiction of the academic grounds for sending a girl home. See also Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Case of Interference', 37–64

When she makes the class rejoice at her belief that Michael Angelo was an archangel, and imagines that students laugh 'all over college' at her ignorant assumption that a renowned Belgian writer might be a freshman, Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* painfully realizes just how imperfect her cultural knowledge is. She does not even associate the latter person's given name, 'Maurice', with a man.⁴⁰ These incidents suggest that a good preparation for college might not only be procured at school, but also in a beneficial social environment. When Judy worked in the orphanage, 'doing everybody's bidding', her high-school attendance was intermittent, and the John Grier Home offered very little in the way of cultural experience.⁴¹ Webster's earlier college character Patty grew up in more comfortable conditions and would consequently not make such mistakes. Judy's situation is far more precarious: quite apart from the different circumstances of her childhood and adolescence, she is dependent on her benefactor for financial support. In that regard she resembles another fictional character whose uncle is said to support his niece only for as long as she excels and he can report her feats to the local papers.⁴² Judy's dependence is an added reason for her to be more aware of academic demands than her predecessor Patty. Having to perform well only to satisfy other parties may be harmful, but Judy is seen to boost her self-esteem and grow ambitious in the process; her success helps her cope with the embarrassment caused by her insufficient cultural and educational knowledge. She makes up for her restricted frame of reference by applying the golden rule of silence whenever she does not know enough and then reading up on her blank areas, or looking up facts she has not learnt. Far from finding such extra work tedious, she thinks it extremely stimulating: 'And oh, but it's fun!' she informs her 'daddy'.⁴³

Energy and dogged diligence are shown to counterbalance academic gaps and/or intellectual tardiness in the lives of several college-fiction characters. By such means, for instance, Lydia in *Elinor's College Career* makes up for the deficient education she had at a fashionable school. Other students who stand out as neither clever nor academically well-prepared may vanish in the course of the stories. One otherwise well-liked girl in *Two College Girls*, for instance, displays her lack of scholarly maturity; on one occasion, she believes that the lines she quotes in class were written by 'Ibid'. While another, too fond of the good life at college and too proud to let it be known that she has been dropped, fakes health problems as grounds for leaving college, the 'Ibid'-girl falls ill and later dies.⁴⁴ Neither

⁴⁰ Webster, 1912/1995, 17–18 and 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2 and 6.

⁴² Schwartz, 1907, 'A Girl to Have Friends', 231–54.

⁴³ Webster, 1912/1995, 29.

⁴⁴ Brown, 1886, 171 and 210–21.

of them made good use of a professor's timely reminders nor of the intellectual opportunities provided by college, and so, it seems, they are out of the story.⁴⁵

A marriage proposal is a convenient excuse when a student drops out because she does not achieve the expected academic standards, as in Daskam's ironical portrait of a young 'butterfly'. That girl first complains of the narrow education at her boarding-school. Realizing that scholarly studies demand too much of her, she dismisses college in about the same words.⁴⁶ Goodloe wrote about a similarly immature character whose successful graduate cousin fails in her aspiration to stop the younger relative from marrying by persuading the girl to go to college. After a gloomy and short period, in which she demonstrates her inadequate knowledge, the freshman leaves and her infatuated Harvard undergraduate, as originally planned, in his turn forgoes his senior year to marry her.⁴⁷ Similarly, the depressing tale in Cook's *Wellesley Stories* about a factory girl, mentioned above in 'An education in democracy', contains a young man to whom the girl can return when she fails at college.

Cook's factory girl is ill prepared for her advanced studies, primarily from the point of view of attitude. Besides, she is handicapped in too many ways – socially, economically, and possibly intellectually as well. The young woman has been through grammar school and then worked in a shirt factory while going to night school. She is finally prepared during two years in a high school, whose authorities have verified her level of knowledge in a certificate on the basis of which the college accepted her application.⁴⁸

Sherrie A. Inness argues that this story proves how college stories subscribed to 'the myth that working-class women are out of their element in a college environment'.⁴⁹ To me, however, the main point of the story is that it shows what conditions are necessary to a student's college career by making it apparent that a girl who is unaware of them must fail.⁵⁰ The factory girl is not unsuccessful primarily because she belongs to a certain class but because she is neither interested in nor feels the need for a higher education. She just wants the experience of living in the environment; it constitutes a fairytale

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴⁶ Daskam, *Smith*, 'The Education of Elizabeth', 123–47.

⁴⁷ Goodloe, 1895, 'A Short Career', 97–105. See also 'A Telephoned Telegram', 189–96, and 'Miss Rose', 205–11; *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'A Reminiscence', 197–201, in which 'coming out' wins over higher education, and 'Catherine's Career', 205–35, in which vague professional goals cannot compete with enamoured feelings.

⁴⁸ Cook, 'Submerged', 143–86. Gallaher described another girl who expected to work hard intellectually, but was ignorant of the social demands involved in campus life, making many mistakes because of that unawareness; 'The Clan', 165–217.

⁴⁹ Inness, 125.

⁵⁰ In 1910, *LHJ* printed the following lament, expressed by a mother whose daughter had been dismissed from

setting for her. College is thus primarily a 'story' she wants to live out. No ambition kindles her, so it is not to be wondered at that she sets store by matters other than lessons, examinations, and time-consuming academic work. In that sense, she has some affinities with Myra in *Elinor's College Career*, though the latter is – for patent reasons – more successful socially. Unlike Myra, however, the other girl never expects to remain on campus for more than one year. She is sorely lacking in respect of all the four requirements which have been mentioned here: knowledge, attitude, adaptability, and financial situation. But for a letter which falls into the wrong hands and is cruelly used against her, she would have 'lived her story' to the end, and that was her only goal. The factory girl almost makes her unsophisticated dream come true, and it is not the academic part of a college education that prevents her. (Interestingly, she passes her exams in history as well as in 'Bible'.)

Cook's story points to the unreliability of school reports. In this case, the college will withdraw the right of certification from the girl's high school in consequence of her failure, and it is emphasized that schools must prepare their pupils more conscientiously. The girl has certainly failed to realize what higher education implies, and her fate emphasizes that any future college girl must be aware of the hard work expected from her by all parties. Women's college fiction frequently indicates that a negligent attitude is more disastrous than a mediocre intellect. In that sense, women's college fiction is positively didactic.

Predispositions for academic work

Apart from her poor academic preparation, Lydia in Schwartz's *Elinor's College Career* is also an interesting example of a student whose talents are restricted in the areas which were important for college-story writers, the arts subjects. Safe in her admirable diligence, agreeing with Miss Ewers' dictum according to which 'work' is the substance of higher education, she primly argues that bright girls wrongly think there is no need to study, instructing Myra about study techniques and the difference between reviewing and cramming. Complying with any teacher recommendation about how to work, Lydia adopts them literally and conscientiously. More concerned with form than with content, more with quantity than with quality, her prosaic mind supplies her with detailed items to fill the required length of an English

college because of her poor results. The mother's expectations resemble those of the girl in *Wellesley Stories*: 'No one told me there was so much work. I asked several people what I ought to do, and every one said to send her by all means; she would have a very good time and being away from home would teach her independence and self-reliance.' Laura E. Lockwood, 'The Girl Who Should Not Go to College', September 1910, 26.

paper. Ironically, that conscientious but average writer tells talented Ruth how to structure a story, using basic advice remembered *verbatim* from Miss Ewers's freshman course. The difference in respect of attitude and interest between the two girls is made obvious when Lydia unconsciously misquotes Wordsworth while Ruth dreamily tastes his famous words: 'The very windows seem asleep'.⁵¹

The story gives no indication that Lydia fails any examination. Usually bristling with knowledge, she nevertheless lacks true understanding, a circumstance which proves disastrous when she takes command in a farmer's family with 'interesting symptoms' of some disease. Feeling omniscient in her superficial, theoretical knowledge of her favourite subject 'hygiene', she looks down on the family of five children, blaming the sickness on the adult farmer's ignorance. Her attitude is actually in tune with that intellectual arrogance towards uneducated people which Elinor resented in her mother. When Lydia catches the scarlet fever herself, she does so in consequence of her lack of experience and humility. It is not shown in the text that she ever gains such an insight, however.⁵²

There is much evidence, however, of Lydia's taking a factual view of her education. When it comes to really seeing what is in the lake, the non-poetical friend is in her element: biology agrees well with Lydia's concrete character. Although Lydia is depicted as gaining much surface knowledge but little in-depth understanding, Schwartz draws her character in a benevolent way, thereby signalling that college is for girls of various kinds.⁵³ Lydia resembles the 'miser' student who hungers for facts and abides by rules, a type delineated in a contemporaneous article.⁵⁴ While Brown's Edna grows out of that stage, spurred on by her teachers, there is no indication that Schwartz's character ever develops beyond her particularly prosaic kind of matter-of-factness.

In *Daddy-Long-Legs* Judy is given a free hand to meditate on what she chooses. Her reflective writing is neither corrected nor commented on. Judy matures and develops in the process. In contrast, the narrator in *Beatrice Leigh at College* conveys flippant student comments on academic learning and faculty. The college girls were supposed to write a one-page theme every day, except at weekends. Half a century later, Sanford discussed the delicate balance between demands of this kind on students – 'heavier work assignments,

⁵¹ Schwartz, 1906, 206–15.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 69 and 149–53.

⁵³ See also Goodloe, 1895, 'Miss Rose', 213–24. Although she is elderly, poor, and hopelessly behind the other freshmen academically, Miss Rose struggles along and is assisted by other students because she is kindly disposed and cheerful.

⁵⁴ Alice Katherine Fallows, 'Undergraduate Life at Smith', *Scribner's Magazine* 24, July-December 1898, 37–58 (55).

more frequent examinations, longer papers, more required reading, and classes ... conducted in an atmosphere of increased grimness' – and students' irresponsible reactions to such measures.⁵⁵ His analysis may be taken to verify the 'cause-effect' coherence indicated in *Daddy-Long-Legs* and *Beatrice Leigh at College*: Judy's experience is beneficial for her development, whereas the wealth of incomprehensible assignments fails to inspire the students in the other college story.⁵⁶

Webster's Patty graduates without having applied any commendable study skills. Even though she claims that she once crammed for a Greek exam, failed, and 'never flunked since' because she learnt to use good study skills, we learn that she actually failed three times in Greek. That is apparently of no consequence for freshman Patty; nor is she seen to reflect on how such failures might be avoided. She is seldom prepared in class; on another occasion she intends to study 'at one fell swoop' for the exam in Old English.⁵⁷ As she does not harbour any professional dreams, Patty evinces no particular ambition but often shows signs of boredom. She is at college because that is where a girl in her position should be. However, unlike the inexperienced girl in Cook's collection, who did not cherish any academic aims, Patty passes her exams. But then, she grew up in an environment which was thoroughly imbued with education – and she benefits from good schooling and her natural wit, charm, and cleverness.

While resulting in a negligent attitude to studies, the pre-education of the main character in *Elinor's College Career* also gave her solid knowledge to rely on. It carries her through three years in which she is not seen to work much. Her slackness is not openly and harshly criticized until the first senior term, the lateness of this censure proving the effectiveness of her preparation. When, from that point onward, she takes her studies seriously, she is amazed to find that they can in fact bring joy and satisfaction.

Fictional characters often comment on the tradition in women's colleges not to grade students; a Yale-educated father, for instance, deplores the absence of regular reports. One of Daskam's books contains examples of the stereotyped comments about unsatisfactory results which students hear during regular discussions with members of the faculty, comments along the lines of 'regrett[ing] to be obliged to mark ... when they realized perfectly that she was capable ...'.⁵⁸ Admirable achievements are not highlighted in conversation or even formally acknowledged; students learn about passing or failing if they receive 'flunk' notes in the mail. The narrator in *When Patty Went*

⁵⁵ Sanford, *The American College*, 68.

⁵⁶ Schwartz, 1907, 'A Wave of Reform', 115–44 (129), and 'Classes in Manners', 172–97 (174).

⁵⁷ Webster, 1903, 49, 140, and 108.

⁵⁸ Daskam, *Smith*, 'Bisquits ex Machina', 88.

to *College* states that staff members imagine that praise would encourage students to stop exerting themselves.⁵⁹ When Elinor's friend, who does not know how to study and has not acquired the necessary diligence, receives her first message of that kind, she challenges the prevailing view according to which one should feel shame at bad study results, claiming that girls take these things too much to heart and are too 'goody-goody'. Elinor supports her; in her view, girl students are 'over-conscientious' and worry far too much about 'insignificant points' at which male students shrug their shoulders. Myra is, however, made to realize that she must study to be able to remain and share the fun on campus; she even comes to enjoy receiving praise for such efforts.⁶⁰ While she does fail later as well, she finally passes by doing of much 'manual labor', as she points out on graduation.⁶¹

One effective measure of correction for lax students is to bar them from taking part in, for instance, basketball teams, stage performances, an editorial board, and societies. That is why Patty is never on stage, a captain of a basketball team cheats during a 'written lesson' to ensure her position in a Daskam story, and Fuller's Christine is – on false grounds – black-balled out of a literary society.⁶²

The latter student acquires valuable insight into the best ways of studying through a bright but poor student who tutors her in German. Noticing Christine's reluctance to work, the other young woman asks the pertinent question why her pupil has come to college in the first place. Impressed with her tutor's stamina, Christine becomes anxious to impress her in return. Having prepared properly for their sessions, she expects some commendation for her efforts but receives none, being told instead that ambitious studying should be the norm. When Christine's reexamination draws near, the tutor points out that her pupil is, in fact, studying too hard at that point: 'Overdoing is as bad as underdoing', she says, adding that it is important to avoid learning every detail. The older student hopes that the experience Christine has had with German will lead her on to success at college. Even though the younger student misinterprets that remark, she nevertheless learns her lesson and is seen to accept the amount of work expected from her.

So does one of the protagonists in *Two College Girls*, who initially announces that being liked by other students is more important to her than any admiration for academic achievement. However, Rosamund grows impressed with a new student's dedication and is furthermore influenced by

⁵⁹ Fuller, 147–48; Webster, 1903, 'Per l'Italia', 150. See also Schwartz, 1906, 319.

⁶⁰ Schwartz, 1906, 240.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 60, 63, and 331.

⁶² Webster, 1903, 'A Crash Without', 215–35 (220); Daskam, *Sister's Vocation*, 'Her Father's Daughter', 179–95; Fuller, 102–19 (the incident was described in a note in chapter three, section 'Womanly characteristics').

a history lecturer and by the woman doctor at college. Living through the illness and death of a little friend, she begins working for a goal of her own choice. In that she resembles Judy almost thirty years later – Judy who initially aims at pleasing her benefactor, but is increasingly dedicated to satisfying her own ambition.

An enlightening story in *Smith College Stories* points to student influence of the kind which started Rosamund's reform. A clever college girl cuts through a Gordian knot which has been a problem for friends, faculty members, and the lady-in-charge by arranging for a bright senior, who is erratic in her studies, to room with a freshman whose frolics have caused general exasperation. Both parties are made to realize that by accepting the proposal they will gain better roommates than they had before, in spite of their great differences. The organizing student even contrives to make each of them promise to behave better so as not to damage the prospects of the other girl. The story ends with an edifying picture, senior and freshman studying in harmony.⁶³

The arduousness of study

During the ceremonies to celebrate the end of the students' academic endeavours in Helen Leah Reed's *Brenda's Cousin at Radcliffe*, the class historian provides her audience with abundant statistics. For instance, the young women are said to have studied for 26,134,720 minutes, using 32,5 gallons of ink for their 5,636,259 pages of theme papers, undergoing examinations for 96 times 24 hours, and spending 1,800,000 minutes listening to lectures.⁶⁴

Most other college stories contain less specific information about how many pages, how much writing, and how much problem-solving work of various kinds students have to sit down and attack. In Fuller's and Schwarz's novels, those labours are often discussed among the girls; their intrinsic worth is used, to no avail, by Miss Ewers when rebuking sophomore Elinor for her 'impressions and opinions' which carry little weight as they are not based on solid facts.⁶⁵

Beginning in their first term, college students would write essays continuously. The guidelines in *The Historical Sketch of Vassar College* mentioned an essay produced every five weeks, whose 'excellences or defects' were to be compared with the principles of rhetoric. The writing should be original and the teacher's criticisms minute.⁶⁶ That training aimed to promote the natural style of thought and expression required in juniors and seniors. Some college

⁶³ Daskam, *Smith*, 'Bisquits ex Machina', 85–119.

⁶⁴ Helen Leah Reed, *Brenda's Cousin at Radcliffe* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1910), 302.

⁶⁵ Schwartz, 1906, 154.

⁶⁶ James Monroe Taylor, 'Aims and Methods of Instruction' in *The Historical Sketch of Vassar College* (NY: S. W. Green, 1876), 38–78.

stories suggest that students write as much as a compulsory paper a day; and in *Across the Campus*, for instance, students sweat over papers in subjects like psychology, aesthetics, and philosophy, as well as over texts by Carlyle and Milton. Their essays are often overdue, which implicitly points to the demand on advanced undergraduates: they should invest some self-criticism in their writing; and reflection takes time.

Christine is subjected to severe discipline because her English teacher, who believes in her talent, thinks she could achieve more. Under the pressure of merciless comments such as 'Why was this paper written?' and 'You can do better than this, try more serious work', she doubles her efforts, growing used to carrying notebooks in which she gathers impressions and expressions. Gradually she begins to receive praise for her work.⁶⁷ The idea that a decisive developmental change will usually take place in students between the second and third year of college is confirmed by the mature way in which junior Christine reflects on the wearisome process of writing and the long stage of preparation: 'the Carlyle paper was beginning to seem less feeble; it would soon reach the beef-tea stage, she thought; and straggling ideas that had been eluding her for several months, now stood and took off their hats respectfully as she approached.'⁶⁸

Often implied in other stories, the exhausting academic work at college is described in *Vassar Stories* in connection with a student who has fallen behind, facing 'the wearisome drag, drag, of topics that never get finished, essays that never get written, lessons that never catch up.'⁶⁹ Gallaher elaborates further on that point by making another character attempt to achieve 'the work of three months in three days', a feat which, according to the narrator, might be accomplished by geniuses but not by anybody else, irrespective of what college boys claim 'in their own accounts of themselves'.⁷⁰

While it devotes little space to the actual work of students, college fiction is strewn with indications of how the characters make use of their arduously acquired knowledge. Their wide reading is shown to provide them with useful frames of reference. Thus students apply their learning from the most often described subject, English, in examining the meanings of words and correcting one another's speech.⁷¹ *Across the Campus* provides glimpses of diverse subject areas taught at college which would be unknown to many readers. The college girls, however, seem completely in command of them. In jest, students connect a man's pronunciation with Grimm's Law, and on other occasions they actually speak Anglo-Saxon: in one instance a piece of

⁶⁷ Fuller, 186–87, 120, and 136.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁶⁹ Gallaher, 'Her Position', 67–102 (88).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 'The Clan', 165–217 (207).

⁷¹ See, for instance, Brown, 1886, 227–31, Gallaher, 'The Moulders of Public Opinion', 43–64, Fuller, 175; Schwartz, 1886, 28, 52, 115, 124, and 181; Webster 1912/1995.

Old English is delivered *verbatim*, and in another the narrator comments on the sound of that ‘strange, unearthly language’. Confucius is quoted to prove a point, while Ruth and Clare solemnly discuss whether one of them is a Pantheist or not, which of course presupposes some knowledge of what the term stands for. When accused of some misdemeanour, a minor character applies what she has learnt in order to declare her innocence, claiming that “‘deliberate and confirmed Doubt, on a question that one has attended to, implies a verdict of *not proven*’”. Students jest about a basketball player who is said to have used the idea regarding the ‘power of mind over matter’ to help her ignore the strong bodies of the other team, thus contributing to the successful outcome of a match.⁷²

In *Elinor’s College Career* the main character, while still reluctant to study, is reminded of Carlyle’s credo: ‘Blessed is the man who has found his work. Let him ask no other happiness.’ (Elinor is quick to retort that Carlyle does not say ‘woman’.) However, three incidents lead up to her final insight into the relevance of Carlyle’s belief to herself from an academic point of view. First she reflects on Carlyle and his ideas again: is she really ‘bad’, since she does not do her best? Shortly afterwards she shoulders responsibility for the senior leadership, an elevated position which demands that she set a good example and ‘shine up’ in her work. The next day, finally, Miss Padan’s precise criticism, focused on deficient intellectual endeavour, floors Elinor. Apart from damaging herself, she realizes, her attitude is detrimental to the ‘intrinsic value’ of the college she has grown to like, as well as to the respect which that institution has gained in American society. Few undergraduates in men’s college fiction are fed a similar view with regard to their particular college and its reputation.⁷³ Towards the end of *Elinor’s College Career*, the reader is informed that most of the seniors, and Elinor in particular, are steady workers. The message conveyed by this series of seemingly unrelated incidents is that whereas occasional brilliance is appreciated, general diligence is expected from a college student, being the one thing needful when it comes to achieving a college degree.⁷⁴

In spite of her uncongenial and impecunious background, Schwartz’s character Ruth is the only one of the four friends in *Elinor’s College Career* who wins the distinction of being selected as an honour student in her final year. Ruth’s college career demonstrates that although some areas – Ruth is not

⁷² Fuller, 280, 141, 300, and 127.

⁷³ Anne’s husband, upbraiding his wife when she is too upset to speak clearly, also invokes the standing of her college; see L. M. Montgomery, *Anne’s House of Dreams* (NY: Frederick Stokes, 1917; repr. NY: Bantam Books, 1992), 180: “‘Anne, I’ll shake you if you don’t grow coherent. Redmond would be ashamed of you.’”

⁷⁴ Schwartz, 1906, 194–95, 278, 280, 286, and 317.

fond of mathematics – will prove less accessible than others for most undergraduates, a student who is willing to work might succeed at college, even if she is also obliged to earn money. Even so, financial support of some kind is required as well.

Lack of financial means

College stories were written in economically unstable times, when few families and students had money to spare for college fees, board, lodgings, and allowance. The threat of insolvency often crops up in college fiction. Edna's higher education is paid for by money which her mother inherited and by the boarders her parents plan on having. In Schwartz's novel, Ruth has been teaching for several years to make college possible, and Miss Rose in *College Girls* has been doing this for more than twenty years.⁷⁵ Anne's colleague in *Anne of Windy Poplars* has lost all hope of a college education; she is sure that she can never save enough on her meagre teacher's salary. The 'submerged' little factory-girl's 'rich lady' could only provide her with one year. When her father loses his money, another protagonist interrupts her education in *Three Freshmen*. A dire message is given in *Beatrice Leigh at College*: a dozen girls do not return after vacation because of the financial 'panic'.⁷⁶

Similar hardships are solved differently in Fuller's and Schwartz's stories. In the former, poverty-stricken students board cheaply off campus, and are busy sewing and tutoring, at times even teaching off campus; they may receive tuition for free if they manage to do their 'very best' in spite of the arduous extra work.⁷⁷ Conversely, because of her excellent academic achievements, Ruth in *Elinor's College Career* receives a scholarship which is large enough for her to remain on campus and occupy herself with less tiring, remunerative occupations.⁷⁸ In Schwartz's next college story, we learn that faculty members will consider 'everything – intellect, personality, character, conduct' before granting a scholarship.⁷⁹ Jean Webster's protagonist Judy is academically deficient at first and has no relevant social experience. Her practical money problems had to be conjured away to ensure a plausible college career and beneficial personal development.

If characters are respected, even liked, other students tend to ease their

⁷⁵ One girl was going to college when a sudden family misfortune changed her plans, condemning her to several years of teaching before she can go, in Schwartz, 1907, 'A Question of Economy', 65.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 'This Vain Show', 198–213; Schwartz, 1899, 'The Genius', 60–80; Anderson, 507.

⁷⁷ More details about remunerated chores are specified in Gallaher, 'The Clan', 165–220 (174–76): girls distribute the mail, dust rooms, mend clothes, make gym suits, work in the library, execute commissions in town, copy essays, wash hair, darn stockings, and clean bicycles. In Cook, they live in special houses where they do domestic work; 'Clorinda', 91–140 (125) and 'Submerged', 168.

⁷⁸ Fuller, 146–52; Schwartz, 1906, 91 and 283.

⁷⁹ Schwartz, 1907, 'Enter Robbie Bell', 67.

economic problems. Thus Rosamund helps Edna when the latter's father dies; between them, the girls in Miss Rose's freshman class collect the sum necessary for her to stay on when her bank has collapsed; and one Daskam story focuses on an academically mediocre but rich senior who saves the last year of a clever student whose family can no longer support her.⁸⁰ As a character in *Bryn Mawr Stories* claims, for various reasons both grinds and geniuses are shown to 'owe as much to their fellows as to their brains'.⁸¹

When students are not part of a genial campus atmosphere, lack of money proves the last straw. For that reason, some students fail to graduate in, for instance, *Smith College Stories* and *Vassar Studies*.⁸²

Instruction and inspiration

The content of academic studies is only briefly touched upon in a passage of *The Princess*, a passage which comprises a mere fifteen lines.⁸³ Mathematics, the Classics, history, psychology, ethics, biology, geology, astronomy, zoology, physics, and chemistry are indicated by the summary information about the lectures to which the invading men in disguise listen. In college stories, English is the most frequently mentioned subject, and the woman who teaches it is the most 'visible' faculty member. However, several references are made to the three areas which were widely considered unsuitable for women but essential for a liberal-arts education in the Yale Report mentioned in chapter one: two of them, mathematics and Greek, form touchstones with the aid of which a student's intellectual acumen is assessed, while Latin is usually regarded as a necessary evil.

Mathematics and the Classics

Mathematics was compulsory; if a student failed to cope with it, her college education was jeopardized.⁸⁴ Most fictional characters view that subject with dread.⁸⁵ By 1906, the following rhyme is said to be a current, even traditional, one:⁸⁶ 'Four little freshmen happy as could be! / One flunked in mathematics – then there were three.'

⁸⁰ Daskam, *Sister's Vocation*, 'A College Girl', 33–50.

⁸¹ *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 'A Diplomatic Crusade', 259–96 (294).

⁸² Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Family Affair', 151–201; Schwartz, 1899, 'The Genius', 60–80.

⁸³ Tennyson, II: 347–362.

⁸⁴ 'Should Mathematics be Required of College Freshmen?' is a topic for written argumentation in Cook, 'The Trial of Professor Lamont', 59.

⁸⁵ See, for instance, Schwartz, 1899, 'That Athletic Girl', 199–210; Gallaher, 'In the Matter of Roommates', 9 and 30, 'The Moulders of Public Opinion', 57 and 67–68, and 'Her Position', 70; Webster, 1903, 'Local Colour', 160; Webster, 1912/1995, 25; and Ruth in Schwartz, 1906.

⁸⁶ Schwartz, 1906, 60.

In college novels mathematics is presented as a subject in which understanding is hard to attain: problems are 'unruly' in *Across the Campus*, and the letters XYZP are structured into a fake axiom to illustrate a temporary feeling of failure. When Christine tries to come to terms with the internal turmoil which Ardis has created, she compares her feeling of total incapacity with a mathematical formula: $x^2=15$. In more recent times, scholars have claimed that a certain approach to teaching that subject leaves students either terrified or convinced that 'mathematics involves nothing more than a set of devices for manipulating numbers'.⁸⁷ The examples in Fuller's book indicate a similar view. A case of abstraction, which would similarly be incomprehensible to most readers, is represented by a fictional logic professor's requiring his juniors to make up realistic examples of an 'undistributed middle'.⁸⁸

Academically reluctant sophomore Elinor uses the mathematical theorem about the '*n*th power of exponents' as a metaphor expressing her own, frustrated, recognition when jubilant freshmen celebrate the cancellation of a 'maths' session. This fictional incident may set off different associations: an alumna reader would recognize the feeling and even understand the implications of the formula; for a non-graduate, on the other hand, the theorem could epitomize the advanced and unintelligible level of college studies. When Schwartz's sophomores finish their required courses, the final one being the trigonometry part, a sign of their immense relief is that they happily act an original play before the first-year students, their successors, celebrating the end of their mathematical miseries. Elinor's friend finds out that this particular year, the play is called the 'Wedding of Sophie Moore to Professor Geo. Metry'.⁸⁹

Webster signalled that freshman Judy would fail in her examination by the way in which the girl describes a theorem about a pyramid and its relations. Judy claims that she can prove the stated principle, but her presentation of it shows that she does not understand her own explanation – she has simply learnt it by heart.⁹⁰

A student in *Wellesley Stories*, however, finds 'beauty and security' in mathematics. One among a few exceptions in college stories, she appreciates the way mathematical laws invigorate and challenge her imaginative skills, stimulating her capacity for thought.⁹¹ She is an exceptional example of the

⁸⁷ Joseph Katz and Nevitt Sanford, 'The Curriculum in the Perspective of the Theory of Personality Development' in Nevitt Sanford, ed., *The American College*, 418–44 (443).

⁸⁸ Fuller, 258, 210, and 180.

⁸⁹ Schwartz, 1906, 171 and 76.

⁹⁰ Webster, 1912/1995, 25.

⁹¹ In *The American College*, 442–43, Katz and Sanford point out that even though mathematics often results in memorizing as shown in *Daddy-Long-Legs*, it may stimulate thought and convey the insights into the 'close affinity between beauty and truth' perceived by the student in Cook's story below.

college girl who excels at skills which society at large thought that only men could attain. Being enchanting as well, she stands out as a refutation of the popular belief that studies in science would ruin a woman's attractiveness.⁹² Montgomery designed a similar character, seductive Philippa, along much the same lines: whimsical and attractive femininity is combined with cold logic. The grumpy old professor of mathematics detests co-eds and has 'bitterly opposed their admission to Redmond'. Nevertheless he cannot 'floor' Philippa. The delightful student is a social success and very attractive to men; she is inundated by marriage proposals. Managing to win a renowned scholarship in mathematics, she announces that she could take one in Greek as well. Nobody doubts her statement.⁹³ Furthermore, writers who made professors of mathematics women, even likeable ones, certainly emphasized that areas which had been restricted to men were in fact open to women as well.⁹⁴

A predilection for mathematics is thus evidence of talent and intelligence. The same can be said of Greek.⁹⁵ The 'genius' in Schwartz's novel is a typical example: 'deeply absorbed in her Pindar', the senior is oblivious to noisy freshmen.⁹⁶ An indication of the high status of mathematics and the Classics is a narrator's ironic comment that some nervous seniors, who obviously continued to study the advanced courses, try to prove the worth of their good education by parading their knowledge of mathematics and Greek when entertaining guests at college.⁹⁷

Latin, however, is not seen to promote mental refinement; the Latin instruction described in women's stories focuses on drills and endless translations, while 'curt and crisp' is a symptomatic characterization of the teachers in this subject.⁹⁸ It is typical that Myra in *Elinor's College Career* is shown to fail when asked to translate a Latin text and that Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* does not pass her freshman examinations in mathematics and Latin.⁹⁹ These two students nevertheless extend their knowledge of the dead language on an individual basis. Judy enlivens a translation assignment by making it into a vivid newspaper report. She thus focuses on content, whereas a more experienced Myra in *Elinor's College Career* later holds up Latin as constituting

⁹² Cook, 'Initiated into Love', 290–340 (296).

⁹³ L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of the Island* (Boston: L.C. Page, 1915; repr. London: Puffin Books, 1994), 46 and 207. See also Goodloe, 1895, 'La Belle Hélène', 60–61; and Schwartz, 1907, 'An Original in Math', 255–98.

⁹⁴ See Goodloe, 1895, 'An Aquarelle', 19–35, in which a young woman is an assistant professor in mathematics; Fuller, 77; and Webster 1912/1995, 48. Judy's is, in fact, the only professor who is expressly said to be a woman in *Daddy-Long-Legs*.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Schwartz, 1906, 16; and Gallaher, 'The Clan', 211.

⁹⁶ Schwartz, 1906, 279.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁹⁸ The Latin teacher in *Two College Girls* is not described in positive terms either; see Brown, 1886, 121–22.

⁹⁹ Schwartz, 1906, 61–62; Webster, 1912/1995, 39. More failures of this kind are found in Webster, 1903, 'Per l'Italia', 160; Schwartz, 1907, 'Enter Robbie Bell', 51; and Gallaher, 'Her Position', 67–68.

useful knowledge from the point of view of semantics and form; she uses Latin words which obviously form part of her vocabulary and which the writer does not translate, an indication that they are supposed to be well known to the reader. Senior Myra says that Latin is a more exact language than English – English whose pronouns, she claims, can cause misunderstandings, producing ambiguities which would be non-existent in the classical language because of its intricate paradigms.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, a story published in 1895 suggests that Greek and Latin are considered to be old-fashioned subjects, being replaced by German, French, or Italian.¹⁰¹ As we have seen, however, Latin is compulsory in other college tales.

In the classroom

One student in *Wellesley Stories* claims that the tests in English and mathematics are the hardest, because they make great demands on each student's capacity for 'thought'.¹⁰² Still, it is a history recitation for sophomores in *Two College Girls* that provides the best illustration of 'brain-training' at college. The particulars given about this lesson elucidate the ways in which college girls had to activate their thinking; and the students' elated and exhausted feelings afterwards anticipate subsequent findings in research on higher education. Intellectual demands and 'hard-hitting' teacher comments are seen to invigorate the young women.¹⁰³ It seems reasonable to believe that Helen Dawes Brown drew on her personal experiences both as a student and as a lecturer at Vassar. As Shirley Marchalonis writes, the reader really 'enters the history class', taking part in the challenging dialogue between professor and students which is abundantly exemplified.¹⁰⁴ Because no other college story presents a similarly instructive illustration of classroom activities, nor such a comprehensive student evaluation of the intellectual challenge contained in them, Brown's tableau is a useful object of examination.

The narrator explains that the history classroom is Professor Powers's proper element: in no other place does he feel so secure and authoritative. Totally in command, he uses open questions whose answers he cannot foresee and poses problems that should be within the range of the students' abilities.¹⁰⁵ In the narrator's words, he is 'inspired' by his knowledge and therefore an 'inspiring' teacher.

¹⁰⁰ Schwartz, 1906, 307.

¹⁰¹ Jessie M. Anderson (Chase), 'Three Freshmen: Ruth, Fran, and Nathalie', *St. Nicholas*, January–May 1895, 191–95, 326–32, 392–96, 504–07, 592–96 (191).

¹⁰² Cook, 'Submerged', 160. On the other hand, in Schwartz, 1907, English is held to be a subject in which it is easy to bluff: see 'A Wave of Reform', 115–144 (129).

¹⁰³ Brown, 1886, 61–74; Nevitt Sanford in *The American College*, 'Developmental Status of the Entering Freshman', 253–82(263–64).

¹⁰⁴ Shirley Marchalonis, *College Girls: A Century of Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Up, 1995), 15–16.

¹⁰⁵ Professor Powers's use of methods and feedback is in line with the approaches advocated in *The American*

Making the students adopt new approaches to facts they have learnt, Professor Powers opens the lesson by asking what the text they have studied is essentially about. Twisting a general comment, he asks them to consider how their education might be fitted into a wider perspective. He encourages those who have started a cognitive process, whereas a student who just repeats what has been said in her own words is cut short and a culprit who failed to prepare is effectively ignored. Professor Powers invites argumentation as part of the learning process and insists that the undergraduates must grasp the relevance of their knowledge to their own lives and times. Expressions of solid knowledge are encouraged. His mode of testing how well his students have digested the given assignment frequently gives rise to free associations. Throughout the recitation, intellectual vitality is thus his lodestar. The firework display of knowledge, understanding, and ideas with which he and his students fill the period illustrates Vassar President Raymond's aspiration: 'Let there be thought'. Cognitive activity is further emphasized by the repetition of 'think' and 'thought' throughout this passage.

Part of the history module is devoted to controlling how well the students have briefed themselves in anticipation of it. This checking-up dimension agrees with the general idea that the freshman and sophomore years should instil good 'preparatory discipline and intoning of the faculties [together with a] habituation to patient and vigorous work'.¹⁰⁶ It is not given much space, though; like her student characters and presumably her readers, Brown was more interested in the stimulating exercises described above – exercises which would, of course, have been less successful if the students had not been well prepared.

During this lesson, Edna is made to understand that her minute knowledge of facts and figures is no longer enough. Her weary journey of cognitive development starts when Professor Powers observes that she possesses detailed knowledge of the past, but that she is totally ignorant of major events 'hurrying' past her every day. This is news to Edna, who afterwards reflects: 'I have always learned my lessons. I don't see what more I could do'. But actually she does realize it: '...now I have to do so many things that I can't get out of books, – things that I have to *get out of myself*' (emphasis added).

College almost eighty years later, as promoting 'critical thinking in the classroom'; see McKeachie, 'Procedures and Techniques of Teaching: A Survey of Experimental Studies' in *The American College*, 312–64 (316–17).

¹⁰⁶ Raymond, John H., 'The Demand of the Age for a Liberal Education for Women, and How It Should Be Met', in James Orton, ed., *The Liberal Education of Women: The Demand and the Method: Current Thoughts in America and England*, (NY: A.S. Barnes & Co, 1873), 27–57 (34).

The absorbing lesson engages Rosamund's mind in spite of her professed lack of interest in academic studies; her absorption is emphasized by the way she stops 'drawing pictures of the professor in her notebook'. Rosamund's body language betrays her discomfort when admitting to being badly prepared; she sits erect and looks straight ahead of her, which are signs of shame or distress – conditions that have been lacking in the portrait of her in the story so far. While he manages to kindle Rosamund's ambition, Professor Powers nevertheless fails in his attempt to create an interest among the students in reading newspapers. A proud student informs him that the class has formed a club where everyone must read such materials for half an hour a day or pay a fine. The realization that the students have misinterpreted his intention, transforming an intellectual necessity into a petty chore, makes him wince.¹⁰⁷

As the students go from this recitation to a lecture in Greek literature, their adaptability is tested; during the latter, active listening, rapid note-taking, and extensive memorization are requested of them. Some of the students' diligence is due to their awareness of forthcoming written tests, in which they know that they will be required to reproduce the lecturer's words. Whereas the preceding seminar aimed at understanding, the lecture relies heavily on knowledge.¹⁰⁸ Reading monotonously from a manuscript, Professor Gordon does not apply such insights into the rules of rhetoric as the girls learn elsewhere. He still manages to transfer his own love of the subject to his listeners, however. The two male scholars, Professors Gordon and Powers, are the faculty characters who primarily represent and teach a reverence both for academic knowledge and for understanding. Their professionalism is not questioned by the girls or by the narrator. Although dryly corrected, actively made invisible, and stringently informed of their insufficient intellectual standards, the students utter none of the open criticism levelled against the majority of the women teachers in college fiction. What they disapprove of in female faculty members is their stereotyped preoccupation with character and soul, in particular when their teaching methods prove dull and predictable, too. It is an intriguing difference; and the fact that it comes out so clearly in *Two College Girls* – the first 'proper' college story, published in 1886 – says something about the divergent gendered perceptions of higher education for women at the beginning of the progressive era.

¹⁰⁷ As was mentioned in chapter two, Brown gained the habit of reading a daily paper at college. While she made Professor Powers disapprove of the girls' decision that neglecting a duty of the kind should result in a fine, Brown claimed that for herself the duty was beneficial – being poor she had to do this kind of reading and learnt to appreciate it. The incident is recorded in Harriot Stanton Blatch, *Challenging Years* (NY: Putnam's, 1940), 35–36; see Marchalonis, 79.

¹⁰⁸ In *The American College*, McKeachie emphasizes that distinction between the expected outcome of classroom activities and lectures respectively; see 320–23.

Brown's detailed description of the energizing history lesson is unparalleled in other stories. A few sentences in *Across the Campus* indicate that professors arrange for their students to be able to combine theoretical and empirical knowledge. In economics, for instance, recorded examples are compared with courtroom experiences: controversies are studied via texts or actual performances and then discussed. After that the undergraduates have to prepare their own solutions to the problems before an ensuing seminar where different ideas are shared and, finally, compared with the actual verdict. In this way, the professor encourages his students to use an extensive range of faculties rather than simply learn by heart. By showing an interest in their opinions and making them reflect, he complies with Vassar President Raymond's credo for a college education: 'so to develop and discipline [the student's] faculties that [she] shall be able in due time to form [her] own opinions and to understand and explain the grounds on which those opinions rest.'¹⁰⁹ The student characters appreciate the excursions, which function as an integrated part of their gradual learning process. However, there are no breathless reactions from the undergraduates of the kind described in *Two College Girls*.

When lessons are mentioned in other stories, they are less exciting. In *Daddy-Long-Legs*, some are confusing, and some are in fact too challenging. Towards the end of her first spring term, Judy implicitly criticizes an English lesson: the students were 'ordered' to comment – at sight – on an anonymous poem written on the blackboard which they had neither seen before, nor been introduced to in any way.¹¹⁰ The command, Judy writes, left the girls in her group bewildered, dejected, and blank-minded.¹¹¹ This is the only assignment of such a nature – which seems more appropriate for the 'upper classes' than for freshmen – reported in *Daddy-Long-Legs* or any other college story.

Judy's male professors in chemistry and history advise their students differently regarding what attitude they should have to scholarly efforts, making the sophomore reflect on whether the focus in academic education should be on details or on a perspective. Her exaggerated application of the latter approach indicates that Judy actually realizes that the two are interrelated: understanding from a perspective presupposes knowledge of details.¹¹²

Whereas Judy's English class showed frustration because the assignment was beyond their powers, one of Daskam's characters – a brilliant but lonely

¹⁰⁹ Fuller, 196–200; Raymond, 1875, in Marion Talbot, *The Education of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910; repr. NY: Dabor Social Science Publications, 1978), 111.

¹¹⁰ 'I asked no other thing' by Emily Dickinson. Anne Kathryn Phillips supplies information about the poem and its possible relation to Webster's Vassar years in "'Yours Most Loquaciously': Voice in Jean Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*", *Children's Literature Annual of the Modern Language Association*, 27, 1999, 64–86 (69).

¹¹¹ Webster, 1912/1995, 48.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 81.

junior – expresses impatience with ‘soulless translations’, assignments which seem too basic for advanced undergraduates. Although Daskam’s junior reads copiously in the foreign languages, writing commendably advanced essays on some of the works she has studied, her instructors in German and French only comment on her poor performance in recitations during which isolated grammatical items are in focus, but not the languages in use. This student is as bored with her lessons as Patty often is in *When Patty Went to College*.¹¹³

While Webster allowed Patty to work out a way of evading questions by learning the professors’ routines in the seminar room, the few examples of teacher questions and comments in *When Patty Went to College* nevertheless suggest that the teachers actually do test the students’ ability to think.¹¹⁴ But these young women are not seen to appreciate the attempts that are after all made to stretch their minds, as Brown’s characters do. The stereotyped structure of the recitations dominates in Webster’s story, and no potentially stimulating challenges are presented, nor is any effective mental response. In that respect, Webster’s early book differs from *Daddy-Long-Legs*, a novel whose graduate author had obviously gained a perspective on higher education at college.

Writing and rhetoric

Not surprisingly, English teachers feature prominently in the four college novels. Always women, they tend to be personally engaged with individual students. In *Two College Girls*, the students mention two outstanding and admired language instructors: Miss Ireland in English and Fräulein Keppel in German. The girls in Brown’s novel voice their appreciation of the ways in which these two teachers combine sense and sentiment. The two of them resemble the respected male professors in the same book, the former because she is considered to promote vigorous thinking and the latter because her vitality and enthusiasm for German literature and linguistics alike invigorate her students and win their commitment: ‘[They] want to forget English, and never do anything but talk and think and breathe German.’¹¹⁵

The English teacher, however, differs from the male faculty members in that she manages to have balanced and personal relationships with the students, an ability which educationalists from different times and cultures have regarded as an important aid in the learning process.¹¹⁶ Her smile will make their day, while her patient practices and advice in and outside the seminar

¹¹³ Daskam, *Smith*, ‘A Family Affair’, 183.

¹¹⁴ Webster, 1903, 44–46, 59–71, 91–92.

¹¹⁵ Brown, 1886, 117–28.

¹¹⁶ See, for instance, Katz and Sanford in *The American College*, 427–28.

room are of good use in other contexts. A letter proves junior Rosamund's stylistic awareness, while Miss Ireland's senior students are shown to be trained readers as well as active listeners. Furthermore, what they have learnt from her lessons about Shakespeare facilitates their preparation for a stage performance.¹¹⁷

These portraits of teachers who are both successful and interested in their work contrast with Daskam's portraits of bored faculty members, one of whom is a German assistant and one an English teacher. Testing her students' grammatical knowledge, the former deplores the girls' lack of love for the language, while the latter feels that the freshmen in her care grow 'stupider and stupider'.¹¹⁸ Admittedly, though, those assessments are certainly influenced by the two women's irritation with their difficult personal situations, an irritation which is strongly expressed by both of them. The two stories differ from college fiction in general in that we are told about the teachers' points of view but never learn how students regard and interact with them.

In Fuller's story, however, we read about the ways in which the students are instructed and their efforts commented on. Miss Carlisle's professional skills are clearly shown in *Across the Campus*. She is said to be the most influential woman on the faculty, and Christine learns that if 'she cultivates *you*, you'll grow'. While Miss Carlisle frequently uses 'Sic?' in written comments to signify 'Do you really mean it?', she is more outspoken in 'Whately', the debating society.¹¹⁹ There the professor listens intently to what her students bring up. Meanwhile she takes notes, and at the end of each exchange of views she provides the incoming participants in the debate with whole bunches of 'omitted refutations'.¹²⁰ Her academic enthusiasm and dedication are similar to those of her predecessor in *Two College Girls*.

More than the earlier two writers, Schwartz focused on examinations, showing on the one hand how the students discuss them and on the other providing flashbacks to bygone recitations and essay interviews in which their work was criticized. The two English teachers – Miss Ewers and Miss Padan – are frank assessors, more remote in their relationships with the students than female faculty members in the previous college stories: they are exclusively concerned with intellectual matters. The moral issue of the personal development of students, an issue with which Brown's and Fuller's English teachers wrestled, is not mentioned in this later story. Miss Ewers in

¹¹⁷ Brown, 1886, 289.

¹¹⁸ Daskam, 'A Reversion to Type', *Scribner's Magazine* 31, April 1902, 453–60 (453); and Smith, 'The Education of Elizabeth', 123–47 (142–43).

¹¹⁹ The society was named after Anglo-Irish Archbishop Richard Whately who wrote manuals that were used in college rhetoric and logic.

¹²⁰ Fuller, 43, 65, 187–88, 218, and 202.

particular makes a sharp value distinction when she comments on essays, a distinction which students may fail to realize. The freshmen listen to peculiar notions regarding the way in which she would treat their written assignments: 'The sophomores say that [Miss Ewers] tacks the essays on the wall and flings her bottle of red ink at each one.' Gradually they realize, however, that there is system in Miss Ewers' assessments. When margins are filled with the repeated comment 'punc. punc.', it means that an essay is considered to be 'hopeless'. Conversely, when a paper is returned red-coloured by various comments, that is a positive sign.¹²¹ Questioned, Miss Ewers acknowledges that her copious use of ink merely indicates that she sees where she can help a student to improve her writing when rewriting. She stresses that the views she expresses so bluntly always relate to the quality of a paper, or to a student's knowledge and performance, not to the individual *per se*. As Myra is a character who does not believe that she is able to improve in English, the comments she receives drown and freeze her; she feels that they point to her lacking innate capabilities; and even though Elinor professes to be irritated by a 'critic' who beats about the bush trying not to discourage the student, she is similarly hurt when Miss Ewers censures her superficial knowledge in summing up Elinor's particularly insufficient recitation.¹²²

The sub-message of this passage from *Elinor's College Career* is that lecturers provide help for the selected group of students who show signs of possible development. Not until a student possesses the basic knowledge of essay-writing which was in fact one of the entrance requirements at Vassar, and which should be possible to acquire, does she receive the benefits of a personal involvement on the teacher's part.¹²³

Lydia, Schwartz's fourth protagonist, is unperturbed by harsh criticism, however. Depicted as self-assured, methodical, and careful, more practical than intellectual, she has not been invested with any sense of humour. These characteristics enliven the account she gives of the way in which the other English teacher, Miss Padan, attacked her writing. They also explain why it all amounts to a hilarious story: Not only does Lydia present major strictures, such as criticisms against insincere content and violations of principles of structure, as being on a par with the teacher's practical reminder that she must write on one side of the sheet only. The lecturer's final point stresses the fundamentals in any kind of communication and therefore the main problem

¹²¹ As has been mentioned, Schwartz translates no Latin words, even though she makes Myra explain that 'punc.' means punctuation, that 'Charis' is Greek for charm, and that 'cela m'est egal' [*sic*] is 'it's all the same to me' in English; 24, 57, and 252.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 125 and 154.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 24 and 36–37. The bored teacher in Daskam, *Smith*, 'The Education of Elizabeth', 142–43, complains of badly written freshman papers; reading and commenting are thus shown to be as burdensome for teachers as the writing of essays is for students.

with the essay: did Lydia understand her own paper? "'... I replied, 'Perfectly, Miss Padan.' She stared at me in the coolest way and remarked: 'That's where you have the advantage of me, Miss Howard.'" ¹²⁴

Summing up everything that has been wrong with Elinor's work up until her senior year from scholarly negligence to general flippancy, that same Miss Padan is instrumental to Elinor's decision to take her studies seriously. Elinor initially reacts vehemently against the intervention although she is seen to accept the censure at face value, aware that she has actually both slighted her opportunities and decried her advantages. Because the lecturer takes the bull by the horns, using plain language, her action puts Elinor on the right track academically. Elinor's ensuing diligent work is shown to be worth while not only for moral reasons; she becomes absorbed with some in-depth projects, taking pleasure in a genuine mental development. She also learns to value the strength and the good intent behind the teacher's interference. Again, 'hard-hitting' teacher comments prove fruitful. ¹²⁵

Interestingly enough, the teacher character Miss Padan herself also finds criticism hard to take: she is shown to suffer pain when she feels parodied in the mock faculty-meeting performance staged by the students, in the course of which faculty members' peculiarities are pointed out. Matter-of-fact Lydia cannot understand the lecturer's reaction, nor can social Myra. To them the whole thing is just a harmless farce, based on observations by the students – and students would be used to accepting jokes of that kind against themselves. The contradiction is apparent: while students should accept strictures about their deficiencies and benefit from them, Miss Padan proves vulnerable to any hint of criticism; Schwartz did not equip this character with any capacity to perceive the humorous elements or make efforts to laugh at the way in which her behaviour is seen through the eyes of the college girls. ¹²⁶

There is no such personal portrait of a faculty member in *Daddy-Long-Legs*: teachers are mentioned, but in a distanced manner. Freshman Judy reports that she thrives on compliments from her English instructor, who is said to appreciate the 'unusual amount of originality' in her student's written work. Mrs Lippett, albeit reluctantly, forwarded a message in the same vein, referring to the trustee's, Jervis Pendleton's, opinion; likewise it would be natural for the orphan's village high-school teacher to have praised her student's ability when it came to handling rhetoric. Hence the information itself is not new to Judy; but for that opinion still to be valid in a more competitive environment is certainly a novelty. Meeting Judy on the premises later, the same instructor voices her appreciation of a poem printed on the

¹²⁴ Schwartz, 1906, 125–26 and 154.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 285–87, 306, and 311.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 299–303.

front page of the college magazine. At the same time, however, she points to an error in the metrical form that Judy has used. Her actions conform to accepted pedagogical wisdom, later also expressed by Sanford and others: the addition of constructive criticism should be beneficial for a person in Judy's situation, since the positive remark is about the general impression and the one suggesting improvement relates to a detail that can easily be understood and corrected. Furthermore, an external and authoritative 'source' providing an analysis of Judy's performance should be valuable for the vulnerable freshman who is aware that she is playing in 'a different league' and therefore needs advice and support.¹²⁷

Progressive subjects

The most frequent references in college fiction to prevalent 'progressive' tendencies concern settlement houses. Usually those instances are associated with charities; and they often carry humorous, even ironical, undertones.¹²⁸

Fuller's students study texts by Edward Bellamy and economist/demographer Thomas Malthus. The former was a writer and journalist who discussed an ideal socialist system and the plight of the urban poor, while the latter pessimistically forecast that the food supply would always be inadequate in relation to population growth.¹²⁹ Fuller took care to supply her characters with many ideas to fuel their discussions, papers, and debates. As was mentioned above, they also go out into the 'real' world and confront those abstract thoughts with actual experiences. On one occasion, for example, their male professor announces that the recitation in economics is to be replaced by the observation of a trial at the Court House. The subject-matter of the trial is trivial, and the narrator's depiction of the cross-examination in the courtroom adopts an amusing and non-empathetic bird's-eye view. Still, in Fuller's story about young women from 1899 it is noteworthy that the topic of the argumentation they listen to is classified by the narrator as a 'new phase of the old struggle, Labor versus Capital'.¹³⁰ The use of the specific, capitalized words is one of the instances where Fuller's moral and 'womanly' text briefly but unmistakably connects on to the current debate inspired by progressive and political trends and attitudes in society, allowing for different points of view.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Webster, 1912/1995, 21, 8, and 38; Sanford, 'The Developmental' in *The American College*, 263–64.

¹²⁸ See Gallaher, 'The Moulders of Public Opinion', 48–49, the 'wild-flower' episode in Schwartz, 1906, 223–24, and the 'doll-dressing' episode in Webster, 1903, 'The Impressionable Mr. Todhunter', 39–56. Furthermore, Webster showed the futility of charity when that occupation is more satisfying to the donor than to the recipient in her boarding-school story *Just Patty*, 1911/1915, 'The Flannigan Honeymoon', 93–114. Goodloe, 1895, for instance, paints the picture of a graduate partaking in settlement work in 'An Episode', 107–43. *Daddy-Long-Legs* presents Sallie at Commencement as looking ahead to full-time settlement work in Boston, 174.

¹²⁹ Fuller, 369 and 281–82; *NEB*, 2:71 and 7:746.

¹³⁰ Fuller, 198–200.

¹³¹ References are, for instance, made to the idea that every individual has male *and* female characteristics to varying degrees.

The first sociology department in the USA was introduced in 1892.¹³² The name of the subject may have caused some confusion, as is shown in *Smith College Stories*; an aunt who claims to be in favour of women's college education mixes up 'Sociology' with 'Socialism', which carries connotations – unappealing to her – to protest movements and unattractive, strident women.¹³³

At the boarding-school in which Patty was prepared for college, the girls study sociology. Unlike the above-mentioned aunt, their teacher believes in all aspects of progressive movements: 'militant suffragism and unions and boycotts and strikes'. Usually she fails to rouse her charges, but on one occasion Patty attempts to apply what she learns during a lecture in sociology. Unfortunately, Miss Lord turns out to embrace radical ideas in theory only; Patty's strike fails.¹³⁴

Junior Judy's electives for study are sociology and economics, followed by 'Charity and Reform' – subjects which have an immediate bearing on her thinking, acting, and planning for the future. Aware from the preceding year that she does not have the vote, in her third college year she criticizes how her country consequently throws away the useful ideas of highly educated citizens. Although she is apparently a dedicated student in the new subjects, she does not mention any teachers guiding her; instead, for example, she comments on the way in which her sociology professor distributed 'his' suggestions for specialized work 'promiscuously' among the students. Her letters inform us that she happened to be given one that was related to her particular interests, 'the Care of Dependent Children'.¹³⁵

Judy is seen to reflect on her own political views, having heard Jervis's relatives describe him – with disgust – as a socialist: the announcement that she is a Fabian looks like as an attempt to find a middle way between her approval of Julia's uncle and her idea of a conservative correspondent. At the same time, her statement clearly incorporates her new knowledge: the terms she uses echo classrooms and textbooks.¹³⁶ We do not learn much of what areas Judy's friend Sallie studies. Nevertheless, she is the one who implements Judy's transforming ideas, and quite a few of her own, at an orphanage in *Dear Enemy*.

¹³² NEB, 10: 928

¹³³ Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Few Diversions', 206.

¹³⁴ Webster, 1911/1915, 55–78.

¹³⁵ Webster, 1912/1995, 127 and 143.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 132–35.

The natural sciences

At Vassar College, German or French (as the third language) could be substituted for chemistry or physics when a student applied for admission; but unlike the situation as regards languages, no examination was required for science subjects, which indicates that they were rarely taught in pre-college education.¹³⁷ The particularities of chemistry and physics would therefore be unknown to a majority of girls entering college, which would explain why college stories introduce them differently from the way the arts subjects, familiar from school, are presented. The two science subjects are referred to by means of formulae and equipment: college is a place where a girl may ask for HNO_3 and know what a Bunsen's burner is, as in *Two College Girls*.¹³⁸ For Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* chemistry remains a strange subject; nevertheless she relishes the imaginative and intricate science problems her sophomore group discusses at dinner.¹³⁹

Although *Across the Campus* is the most 'womanly' of the four novels, that book provides a broad and non-domestic – if at times naive – view of the science subjects which could be studied in higher education; Fuller's novel includes information about zoology, astronomy, mineralogy, and physics, whose students have even formed a special society. The presentation of physics adds to the peculiarities of the kindred subject, chemistry. Strange appliances offer exhilarating experiences, such as watching people walk on their heads in a camera-obscura, while exaggerated results are passed on about the experiments undertaken in the laboratory. For instance, a freshman 'blew [herself] up four times', not unexpectedly injuring her hands, while science students at a 'symposium' entertain guests in a decidedly dangerous way: 'something generally blew up before the afternoon was over'. At the same time, those subjects are not tainted with any allusion to women's poor mastery of them, unlike the implied inadequacy which is usually associated with women and mathematics. In a discussion about music and pantheism, Christine shows that knowledge gained in physics can actually explain daily phenomena: she uses her factual understanding that music 'is caused by the motion of material things' as a starting-point in a discussion. A facetious zoology professor, finally, provides controversial items of information about what is included in the curriculum: informing outsiders that there are 'no proper appliances for dissecting babies', he confirms both that college girls cut into animals and – by referring to evolution and monkeys – that they would study Darwin's thesis.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ *Annual Catalogue of Vassar College 1897–98*, 20.

¹³⁸ Brown, 1886, 179.

¹³⁹ Webster, 1912/1995, 69–71 and 81–82.

¹⁴⁰ Fuller, 64, 376–77, 278, and 267.

As was pointed out above, girls in *Across the Campus* often leave their classrooms. Astronomy students ‘stagger’ about at night because they have their eyes fixed on the stars, confusing non-informed undergraduates by making ‘mysterious dots’ in their notebooks. While Brown’s description of an autumnal tramp focuses on the girls, their feelings, and their adaptation to conventional, feminine behaviour, seniors in Fuller’s novel actually take part in, write notes about, and comment on the object of their excursion – tracing old riverbeds. Their leader speaks to them about the aim of the odyssey, stating the history of the river and showing his group how the ancient bed, now out of use, can still be detected. Various characters make remarks which point to philosophical thinking; for example, one student reflects that ‘we can find the childhood of a river in one place, and its manhood in another, and yet they’re both going on at the same time’.¹⁴¹

Campus activities and responsibilities

The activities in which students were involved when studies determined by the curriculum did not claim their undivided attention form an essential part of the college atmosphere, a part which graduated college-fiction writers clearly attempted to convey to the broad mass of people with no relevant experience. The major share consists of the social contacts between girls, in which jokes and witticisms mingle with serious talk. Montgomery shows a possible lingering effect of such conversations, in which play with words was central. Graduate Anne resorts to academic tomfoolery in order to stop a belligerent old woman’s whining. It proves a lucky stratagem:¹⁴²

‘He’s on your school-board, ain’t he? What do you really think of him and his opinions on eddication?’

Anne went wicked. After all, she had endured a good deal at Mrs. Gibson’s hands that day.

‘I think he’s a psychological anachronism,’ she answered gravely.

Mrs. Gibson did not bat an eyelash.

‘I agree with you,’ she said.

But she pretended to go to sleep after that.

Students who take part in extracurricular exercises of various kinds learn important skills, in particular if they assume the time-consuming, at times frustrating, duties of committee members and leaders. Apart from receiving general attention – the prestige inherent in those posts is repeatedly accentuated – students elected for the elevated positions are rewarded by the honours system for their extra work. Such appointments are desired ones in col-

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 223 and 256.

¹⁴² L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Windy Poplars* (NY: Frederick Stokes 1936; repr. NY: Bantam, 1992), 98.

lege narratives, even though it is often pointed out that characters who agree to be managers of classes, clubs, committees, or performances must brace themselves for more criticism than applause. This is borne out in, for instance, *Wellesley Stories*: the narrator comments that 'everyone' knows that 'the management of a large committee is, next to editing the [college magazine], the most thankless task in college'.¹⁴³

In college fiction, voluntary obligations are thus seen to fill much of a college girl's spare time. One of Daskam's collections shows how these activities compete with pressing demands from home, friends, faculty, and other students. Daskam's story ends with a 'popular and prominent' junior's detailed programme for one day, a schedule which belies the notion that a college girl is merely having a good time. More than six hours are set aside for academic work, while various committees and clubs need another three and a half hours. An additional hour is earmarked for the strengthening walk which was required of students.¹⁴⁴ Daskam's character is on the committees for the 'house play', the golf and the mandolin club, and the Alpha society. The most common campus-life activities involve class meetings in which students abide by the rules in manuals telling them how to structure and run assemblies, sport events (golf, basketball, and field day competitions), college performances, and the monthly production of the college magazine. In Fuller's novel the joys and sorrows of the glee club and its committee take up much space, and aspects of leadership are discussed. When she has voluntarily surrendered the junior presidency to Ardis, Christine argues that 'power' gives a leader both a chance to do good and an opportunity to do evil, an opinion with which her interlocutor disagrees. The reader can see both ways materialized: Clare, the third protagonist, staggers under her own demands for musical and administrative excellence but never wavers from her responsibility to exercise good leadership in the glee club, while Ardis uses her diverse high positions for her own pleasure and for acts of retribution, neglecting much of the work and duties involved.

In *Daddy-Long-Legs*, Judy's friend who becomes the main protagonist in *Dear Enemy* is actively running for and duly elected sophomore class president, and Judy canvasses votes for her during the campaign.¹⁴⁵ What Sallie learnt in that elevated position prove to be valuable assets in her role as head of an orphanage in *Dear Enemy*: leadership entails being in authority, making one's voice heard, planning ahead, delegating in a judicious way, making decisions, and then taking a firm stand. To quote from a contemporaneous

¹⁴³ Cook, 'Sir Toby's Career', 243–87 (263).

¹⁴⁴ Daskam, 1904/1970, 'The Point of View', 139.

¹⁴⁵ Webster, 1912/1995, 151 and 69.

article: 'It takes independence of thought, either natural or acquired, to outline a policy, tact to carry it out, and a keen understanding of human nature to deal with personal issues successfully'.¹⁴⁶

Organizers of the magazine and of recurrent performances are very much to the fore in college narratives, which dwell on their problems and successes. These people need to be effective administrators and patient but insistent leaders, who never lose sight of their central task: good quality produced within the scheduled time limit.

Editorial work

Fictional students who are elected to the editorial board of college periodicals are extremely proud when they are appointed. They have often dreamed of such a position. Senior Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* thus feels highly sophisticated when she has been selected for the many-faceted responsibilities pertaining to the editorship of her college magazine.¹⁴⁷

A short story in Gallaher's collection, however, provides humorous insights into the drudgery and last-minute panic before the required pages of a magazine are filled, suggesting that the chores of an editor might soon dispel any comfortable sensation of belonging to the select few. It is late at night; *The Monthly* is due at the printers' in the morning, but the magazine is not even half complete. The members of the board persuade tired students to produce essays, stories, and poems; they read, write, correct, and edit into the small hours, taking pride in meeting the deadline against the odds. That scene is contrasted with the opening passage in which a male guest lecturer emphasizes that college magazines should be produced with the 'utmost care', because they are expected to have a major influence on college life. The editors foresee that faculty members and 'Prexie' will, as usual, complain about the content of the magazine.¹⁴⁸ As the material is written in great haste and not, in the words of the lecturer, produced with the utmost care, the expected criticisms may well be justified. In *Wellesley Stories* the narrator describes how the student-produced magazine is normally received, saying that on its appearance it supplies material for dinner conversations. The direction of those remarks coincides with the one that Gallaher's editors are grimly expecting: the narrator explains that readers tend to be unsparing in their comments, deploring the editors' poor taste in their choice of texts as well as the flaws in the labours of student poets; readers will, it is claimed,

¹⁴⁶ Alice Katherine Fallows, 'Self-Government for College Girls', *Harper's Bazar* 33, July 1904, 698–705 (701).

¹⁴⁷ Webster, 1912/1995, 151.

¹⁴⁸ His speech focuses on professional women writing for family papers rather than dealing – as was expected – with journalism in general, which makes one student comment sourly that college girls 'are human beings if [they] are women.' See Gallaher, 'The Moulders of Public Opinion', 43–64 (43–44).

only approve of humorous passages.¹⁴⁹ Undergraduates who contribute and those who edit will consequently learn to receive both admiration and open criticism and to take both for what they are worth. If they can cope with that fraught situation, they will gain mental strength.

In *Across the Campus*, the focus is on the way in which those willing workers are elected. Realizing that a talented girl has been manipulated off the list of editors, a minor character voices her frustration over the influence of undergraduates on the proceedings. Even though faculty provides a guiding hand, suggesting who should be offered those coveted positions, scheming or stupid girls, she says, always elect the wrong persons for important posts. (Indirectly, she thus calls democracy at her college into question.) In Daskam's *Smith College Stories*, however, those who vote for popular rather than suitable persons are in the minority. A girl is depicted as gaining no friends at college but having a talent for writing; she becomes the editor-in-chief, being suggested by both the rhetoric department and a majority of the editors.¹⁵⁰

Students are seen to make themselves eligible by managing to have a certain number of lines printed in the college paper. In *Elinor's College Career*, a student who expresses her dream of joining the editors is hence writing 'like mad' at the last minute. The situation of the retiring board is not as precarious as the one presented in Gallaher's story above, but the members work under pressure; the manuscript is due at the printers' by the morning, and the girls are keen to finish their voluntary work – it is the last magazine for which they are responsible – 'in a blaze of glory'. Ambition and responsibility make them dedicated. In her next book, Schwartz followed up that theme by showing students who work extremely hard for the magazine, having to make judicious decisions about which contributions to favour from the 'avalanche' of manuscripts they have received.¹⁵¹

Theatricals

College theatrical performances are described in most college stories. Drama exercises are instrumental as a preparation for the ordeal of facing a large audience on one's own. In a longer perspective, such activities make student self-confidence grow. Admitting that she is as 'stiff as a poker' and fearing that she will lose her voice from stage fright, Edna in *Two College Girls* is not on stage. She is an exception among fictional characters, who usually compete for parts.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Cook, 'A Lyrical Interlude', 189–239 (200).

¹⁵⁰ Fuller, 209; Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Family Affair', 187–91.

¹⁵¹ Schwartz, 1906, 130; 1907, 255–61.

¹⁵² Brown, 1886, 223. Fuller gives an extensive description of students auditioning, 346–75.

Even though Brown's and Fuller's novels mention faculty and a male director respectively as being part of the planning, the student committee is seen to work hard before and after the big night. Brown and Webster (in *When Patty Went to College*) describe the preparations and the performance in a jocular way. Nevertheless, the details provided about rehearsals and dress-making do show students at work; scattered instruments are made into an orchestra by a musically skilled student, while other participants take pains to arrange the various scenes.¹⁵³ In *Bryn Mawr Stories* we learn about the tedious labours required after a performance, when all used items must be collected and returned to their proper places. Because the managers failed to appoint a committee for that work, people who want to help render the task more difficult by not being careful and methodical.

While Fuller's chairman of the dramatics committee combines executive ability with good temper, which helps her in bad moments, Daskam describes a weary committee chairperson who is tired of her stressed situation in which she seems to assume more responsibility than all the other members and actors put together. Another of Daskam's students, the editor-in-chief mentioned above, is in the same position of absolute authority; she rewrites *Twelfth Night* into a sly satire, then stages and directs her production. A long and merciless rehearsal season brings perfect success to all involved.¹⁵⁴ In this story, hard work and constructive criticism are, again, seen to generate rewarding results.

A popular and talented girl in *Wellesley Stories* shows how such a person is usually blessed or burdened with more than one prestigious duty. This undergraduate is, however, completely worn down by her various responsibilities. Her briefly sketched family situation is precarious; she is the business manager of the college magazine and consequently responsible for soliciting advertisements and handling the printers; other students want her to accompany them on her mandolin; but her most demanding post is that of chairing the senior play committee. We learn that though she is responsible for solving any 'intricate' problem, at the end of the day the actors will receive the glory.¹⁵⁵

Thus college fiction describes non-compulsory experiences which are at times exasperating. As we saw, however, older students advise newcomers to take on such challenging work, and for good reasons. What college girls learn from their endeavours in those activities forms an essential part of the development they go through during their college education, and the fictional texts frequently stress that point.

¹⁵³ Brown, 199–209; Webster, 1903, 215–35.

¹⁵⁴ Daskam, *Smith*, 'A Case of Interference', 37, and 'A Family Affair', 189–90.

¹⁵⁵ Cook, 'Sir Toby's Career', 243–87.

Individual development

It stands to reason that the best fictional examples of individual development are found in the full-length novels, in which characters are presented over a long period of time. Nevertheless, the short-story collections convey some impressions of the ways in which students mature thanks to higher education. A senior in *Vassar Studies* contemplates how she has gradually gained discriminative powers, skills to classify, and appreciation of intellectual honesty – acquisitions which a professor sums up as a ‘gradual deepening of insight’. One story in the Bryn Mawr compilation emphasizes a ‘largeness of view’ and a ‘ready grasp of affairs’; seniors have learnt never to take a statement at face value, but consistently challenge its validity. Another story points to the influence of college on a girl, at that point a senior, who grew up in a forbiddingly religious environment but has developed other values and seems capable of assessing them. Having gained a ‘historical perspective’ and a habit of ‘cool unbiased judgment’, she now classifies the beliefs she once shared as narrow-minded and ignorant.¹⁵⁶

This outcome of women’s higher education would certainly be regarded as a major disadvantage by family and friends back home. The difficult position of having outgrown an environment which was originally enough for them is also experienced by Webster’s Judy on her second visit to the Semples and by Montgomery’s Anne, on summer holiday from college in Avonlea. Being turned into someone who feels like and/or is looked upon as an outsider are the only two traits I have found in college fiction that would actually agree with any of the apprehensions voiced in the debate at the time.¹⁵⁷

The credo from the early days of Vassar College – ‘let there be thought’ – is abundantly represented in all college fiction. Characters probe, discuss, and implement the new knowledge and ideas they encounter in their higher education. The acquisition of new or broadened attitudes and social skills which, decades later, Sanford *et al.* were to present as the desired results of a successful liberal-arts education is a major feature in the four novels. In the first three novels, most students arrive at college with marked flaws in their character concerning their approach to academic work, or their dealings with students who differ from themselves in some respect. In the course of various events they improve, becoming more diligent and effective as well as gentle and friendly, retaining their own personalities in the process.

¹⁵⁶ Schwartz, 1899, ‘The Ghost of Her Senior Year’ 211–38 (229); *Bryn Mawr Stories*, ‘A Diplomatic Crusade’, 259–96 (269) and ‘Within Four Years’, 99–136 (113).

¹⁵⁷ Webster 1912/1995, 111; Montgomery, 1915/1994, 222. See also Daskam, *Smith*, ‘At Commencement’ 279–318, Gallaher, ‘In the Matter of Roommates’, 3–39, and ‘A Sense of Obligation’, 105–21.

One important protagonist, Fuller's Ardis, forms a sharp contrast to all other characters, but particularly to Webster's Judy in the fourth novel as far as personal development is concerned. On her arrival at college, Ardis dazzles everyone with her extrinsic advantages; her formal education, wit, beauty, general appearance, and self-assured behaviour are overwhelming. Nevertheless she does not mature at college; her failure to develop is seen throughout this book, in which she functions as a negative foil to the other college girls. Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* is the other extreme. As we will see, Webster's orphaned protagonist develops more remarkably, and by different means, than the main characters in the earlier books. From her – in every respect – unprivileged origins, Judy's personal and gradual adaptation in *Daddy-Long-Legs* to study concentration, neighbourly behaviour, acceptance of self, and final independence is an unusual achievement in college fiction. Judy's development, more extensively discussed towards the end of this section, is partly shared by the protagonists in the earlier three novels.

Attitudes and ambitions

The magnitude of inter-student influence, which is hardly visible in *Daddy-Long-Legs*, is a fundamental theme in Brown's, Fuller's, and Schwartz's stories. It is shown to be the major factor behind the emotional and attitudinal changes that Edna, Christine, and Elinor go through; these students are made to understand that part of their social responsibility consists in making themselves accessible to and accepted by more students than the few they feel akin to. Making efforts in this direction, they realize the truth of the axiom which Edna expresses: It is the 'love that goes out of us even more than that which comes in, that warms our hearts.' The way Edna begins to grasp the benefits of that attitude is illustrative. Before college, she regards those who do not share her particular and school-girlish preferences as 'cut off from all human sympathy', as is seen in her treatment of a fellow passenger during her long journey from home. Rosamund – the easygoing girl she is going to room with – is viewed as a shallow and flighty student who should be treated accordingly. Once they are acquainted, however, Edna is made to reflect on a difference between them which is not to her own advantage. Invested with the awareness that she dismisses anyone she considers sub-standard, perplexed Edna has to admit that Rosamund actually tolerates her new 'poky' and different room-mate. During a first encounter with Rosamund and her boisterous friends, their generous ease when meeting strangers like herself puzzles Edna. So far, she has been condescendingly characterizing herself as 'enduring'; from that moment on Brown allows her to understand that she must make herself 'endured', too, by her fellow students. Her well-

ordered conception of the world is consequently questioned. In the words of an *Outlook* writer, who considered this kind of experience vital to a freshman, Edna thus experiences the first crack in her 'shell of prejudice and personal peculiarity, [learning from that incident] that her standard is not that absolute canon of truth and propriety she had thought it.'¹⁵⁸ Edna's journey towards generous empathy has begun; at college she adapts to social behaviour generally felt to be desirable for all.

Although she lacks an interest in other people, Edna in *Two College Girls* is characterized by her reverence for academic education from the start, whereas it takes time for socially confident Rosamund, Christine, and Elinor to acquire it. As they develop in this respect, they are first made to realize that they ought to be more serious in their studies; then they gradually begin to appreciate those parts which catch their interest and sit down to study, spurred on by their own curiosity and ambition. When, for instance, Rosamund learns to perceive the benefits of daily, diligent work, and the difference between superficiality and solid values, she is first influenced by faculty members and Edna. Like the other two students Christine and Elinor, she thus starts by attempting to satisfy the demands of other persons. In due course, however, biology catches her fancy and she is shown to understand the joy of studying for the sake of her own interest. In the episode where she nurses a dying friend, Rosamund's behaviour exemplifies what may be called a professional attitude: tender, womanly attentions beside Kitty's bed are combined with a distanced and reticent attitude when she is among the other girls, who inquire about her patient. The college doctor recognizes a future colleague in Rosamund and therefore entrusts her with responsibilities that are not extended to other undergraduates. Rosamund's upbringing has provided her with a healthy self-confidence and financial means, but she enters college with the sole aim of enjoying herself as much as her brother does at a male college. When her ambition is kindled by a combination of awakened academic interest and her nursing experience, the kind of background she comes from makes it natural for her to turn her higher education into a springboard for more demanding tasks in the field of medicine.

Rosamund's self-confidence is never really shown to fluctuate, but another character in *Across the Campus* comes to doubt herself. Having begun her college career as a reckless and haughty girl, Christine is seen to mature thanks to the various disappointments she suffers, challenging her own preconceptions in the process. Fuller used Christine and Ardis as opponents and orchestrated repeated discussions between the two to elucidate their differ-

¹⁵⁸ Brown, 1886, 190, 26, and 51–52; Kate Holladay Claghorn, 'College Training for Women: I – What May Be Expected from It', *The Outlook* 55, 20 February 1897, 546–48 (546).

ent personalities. At an early point, it is apparent that those debates and college in general make Christine's ideals 'expand'; she thus professes a willingness to test and at times revise her own moral views, while, typically, Ardis just wants to win the argument.¹⁵⁹ Unlike Christine, diffident Clare in the same story gradually becomes less insecure. In depressing moments both of them attempt to analyse their situation in order to come to terms with it, not unlike the ways in which Webster makes Judy gain an understanding of her position. Adopting such a constructive course of action is seen to put fresh courage into the girls.

While Christine is invested with egocentric self-confidence which the text clearly indicates must be changed in a painful manner, Clare's development is presented as a steadily upward movement. Initially 'sorry' and afraid, often with 'little' added to her name, she learns to stand up for her views. When she is unanimously elected leader of the glee club because of her musical talent, this distinction boosts her self-confidence. In that demanding situation and without the support we realize she is used to receiving from her mother, she learns the necessary principles for anyone in a superior and exposed position. One significant incident focuses on choir members' arrogant conduct towards her. Their behaviour confuses Clare, a reaction which is explained by the narrator as follows: '[r]efinement is always helpless in the presence of vulgarity, because vulgarity does not fight fair.' Fuller devised ways in which Clare, originally such a gentle student, finds and applies resolute methods when placed in this precarious situation. Combined with the superior mental capacity for understanding that Clare possesses, her leadership talent, which comes across as a contrast to other students' authoritarian and devious methods, wins respect even among those who have tried to spite her. In her junior year, Clare is moreover seen to master skills in rhetoric and logic better than Ardis; Clare 'graduates' in those techniques when, as a senior and glee-club leader, she braves the President. Planning an extra concert, Clare has persuaded the club members to agree to the extra amount of work, and then requires permission for her idea. That support is won because of what is acknowledged by the man in command of the college to be her excellent argumentation.¹⁶⁰

On Commencement day, Christine and Clare look confident and ready to face the future, albeit conforming to the restrictions placed on them because of their sex. At college, unprotected by their homes, they have learnt to face situations and modes of behaviour they have not witnessed before, nor ever been trained or even prepared for.

¹⁵⁹ Fuller, 33.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 231–309.

In Edna's case, college has given her widened frames of reference; junior Edna in *Two College Girls* is seen to appreciate things at home toward which she was indifferent or even critical before college. During her vacation, the characters described in the opening family-tea-party chapter are seen from an older and wiser Edna's point of view. When Edna's grandmother appeared in the initial chapter, Edna showed no interest in her; that attitude was confirmed by the narrator's stressing the older woman's dialectal and unsophisticated language and referring to her as 'little'. By such means the character was cut back from the centre of the action, and her unwillingness to support Edna's leaving the family marginalized her further. During Edna's last summer vacation, the young woman writes that by that time she enjoys talking about literature with her elderly relative, who is now an appreciated partner in literary discussions; Edna discovers that her grandmother's favourite writer is Alexander Pope – the advocate of clarity and profound understanding. Brown's novel shows how two years of college education have taught Edna to detect hitherto unappreciated qualities in her home environment; she writes that 'the odd part of it is that I'm just finding out'.¹⁶¹

During the first part of their education, Elinor and Lydia in *Elinor's College Career* express rebellious attitudes towards women's colleges. They are, however, later seen to accept, indeed favour, the *status quo*. As they learn to love college and all that the institution comprises, their demands for equal rights and democratic rules vanish into thin air. In Schwartz's novel, maturity hence entails the abandoning of radical views and ideals. Nevertheless, opinions about women's higher education which were rife at the time are distinctively on the agenda in *Elinor's College Career*, from beginning to end. Some of them are concerned with the questions of whether women are obliged to choose between sacrificing 'the perfection of personality' and perpetuating 'the race', and whether students must remain 'namby-pamby' or may be granted influence over college decisions.¹⁶² The former issue is admittedly mentioned in a humorous context, but on the latter Schwartz's text comes down on the side of what may, with hindsight, be called the progressive position.

The three novels contain few indications that any one of the main protagonists harbours any desire to extend her advanced studies. Schwartz's story paints unfavourable pictures of college alumnae and presents a graduate's daughter, Elinor, who aspires to be womanly rather than scholarly, which is the term used to describe her mother. Elinor and her friends interpret the former term as primarily pertaining to appearance and behaviour.

Neither of the concepts 'scholarly' and 'womanly' is mentioned in *Two*

¹⁶¹ Brown, 1886, 12–19 and 222–27.

¹⁶² Schwartz, 1906, 27 and 323.

College Girls; but although several changes are described regarding Edna's behaviour and attitudes, she remains dedicated to woman's sphere. Her once extreme ambition is satisfied when she does well at college. She will have stood out as a positive example for girls in the 1880s and seemed especially encouraging for those in society at large who regarded women's college education with some apprehension. The development of Edna's character lends support to the view that higher education might rub the edges off a non-social girl as well as, or even better than, her home environment without making her eager to expand women's activities into male domains. That kind of development would certainly have been appreciated at the time.

Interestingly, Brown's other protagonist combines womanly traits with scholarly ambitions. Although she accepts given assignments, Rosamund is never quite 'domesticated' into docile behaviour. She resembles the heroines Webster created: wily in the company of men, charismatic but not over-refined among other girls. Webster's college girls as well as Rosamund are average academically, but focused and dedicated once their goal has been determined. Brown's bold character is always on the lookout for new challenges. This is evident when, during the seniors' educational outing, she climbs to the top of the railing on the upper boat deck, clasp the flagstaff at the prow. Her action is daring and unwomanly; but the rest of the party does not mind. Senior Rosamund wants it all: she refuses to accept that she must choose between marriage and a career. Friends and faculty on the boat see her as a figure of hope, even a vision of America herself – a nation in which Edna's father claimed that everyone was allowed the chance to fend for her/himself. Given that a young woman with Rosamund's background could count on financial support for the realization of such a dream, that synecdoche seems appropriate in this context; Rosamund certainly does not envisage any gender-related restrictions when contemplating her future. In Webster's novel, by contrast, pecuniary aspects are urgent and problematic.

Going it alone: Webster's Judy

In the earlier three college stories by Brown, Fuller, and Schwartz respectively, characters are shown to adapt to prescribed values by means of group influence, and at times through advice from dedicated faculty women. Webster broke with that tradition of 'peer pressure'. Nor do teachers, by and large, intrude on student life; *Daddy-Long-Legs* gives strikingly small space to faculty. In contrast to such characters as Rosamund, Edna, Christine, and Elinor who depend on others for their development, academic as well as social, Webster's protagonist is very much guided by individual perspectives and commitments. Judy does not speak of any college friend or any faculty

member as having been instrumental in her progression towards maturity. Her capacity to deal with problems on her own as they arise increases throughout the story. Not least because the focus in this novel is on one college girl who develops into an independent individual by means of solitary reflections expressed in writing, I see *Daddy-Long-Legs* as the culmination of the subgenre of women's college stories.

When Judy realizes her academic shortcomings, she regards it as her own responsibility to remedy them. For instance, she cracks the code about how to pass examinations. In that process, the merits both of reading the works she selects herself and of studying the set books are recognized. Consequently, she is neither dependent on authorities nor antagonistic to them, which favours her intellectual and social development.

I have found Gertrud Lehnert's argument about schoolgirls internalizing values about femininity to be valid for most college stories; however, it does not fit in with Webster's novels, in which the protagonists make individual choices about what ideas to accept or reject.¹⁶³ Even if Judy's pride in being a woman is illustrated by – for instance – the widely accepted feminine propensity for aesthetics, she nevertheless revolts at the idea that women's sphere should be subject to specific restrictions.

Jean Webster's choice of form for her novel permitted her to plant signs of her main character's gradual development by means of changing the style and content of Judy's letters during the four years at college.¹⁶⁴ Earlier college novels supply the thoughts of more than one character, and at times a narrator makes informative comments. In 1999, Anne Kathryn Phillips discussed how Webster's first-person narrative presents different stages of Judy's increasingly independent 'voice'.¹⁶⁵ In addition, I would submit that the text constantly points to Judy's successful strategy of developing intellectual strength and acumen without letting her mental growth undermine her femininity.

The letters contain Judy's immediate reactions and thoughts. The details of her ordinary college life with lectures, reviews, recitals, and spare-time activities are rarely more than indicated. Still, her comments convey the image of a girl enjoying all the physical and mental activities provided by a college education: Judy certainly utilizes all opportunities offered to her. She

¹⁶³ Lehnert writes: 'Hence, it is not so much the ubiquitous teachers who enforce the rules of behavior but the schoolgirls themselves. Having thus internalized the prevailing values, they are able to pass them on to each other.' 'The Training of the Shrew: The Socialization and Education of Young Women in Children's Literature', *Poetics Today* 13, 1992:1, 109–22 (113).

¹⁶⁴ See, for instance, how signs of colloquial language (14–40) disappear in the course of Judy's education, how she tries out hitherto unknown words in her vocabulary (28, 52, and 54), and how she reflects self-critically on her writing (140 and 146); Webster 1912/1995.

¹⁶⁵ Phillips, 1999, 64–86.

learns to swim, is beaten black and blue at basketball, studies hard, develops her writing skills by reading extensively, enjoys beautiful clothes and cosy furnishings, takes part in political rallies, committee work, and performances, associates socially with the other girls, and strikes up an intimate friendship. In this way she epitomizes how a girl can grow both emphatic and empathetic, both firm and caring, by means of an academic, liberal college education. Her development in this respect is demonstrated by the gradual ways in which she gains insights about herself and independence in relation to the man who supports her financially. The refining of Judy's argumentative skills and her increasing awareness of existential and intellectual complexities are made obvious, going hand in hand with her emerging sense of security at college and in the world.

Judy's self-assessment before college relies on an acceptance of the inferior and vulnerable status of an orphan, who lacks both a family and the means to support herself. This awareness of inferiority comes out when she – on being summoned to the office – suddenly has 'a note of sharp anxiety' in her voice, automatically preparing to receive a scolding for whatever may have gone wrong. Face to face with Mrs Lippett, the matron of the John Grier Home, she acts the obedient, obliging subordinate. Her ensuing writing at college, however, turns out to foster not only the 'facility in literary expression' which the anonymous benefactor desires and expects, but also – and especially – increased self-respect rooted in deepening knowledge of her own abilities and character. As Karen Rosenberg says, the story 'reads like a diary'. Judy pours out her thoughts about herself and the world, continually revising, clarifying, enlarging, and sharpening her perceptions and reasoning in the course of her education.¹⁶⁶

At college, Judy gradually acquires mental autonomy, beginning early by undermining the explicit orders about the monthly letters and renaming her powerful benefactor, thereby criticizing his choice of John Smith for an alias. In fact, Judy sets the rules for her one-way correspondence, although she is ordered at the outset never to expect an answer. Almost every letter contains a demand for a response from the unknown trustee, often also assurances of his caring for the student girl, or they imply a two-way communication in which the two are of one mind: 'we won't tell Mrs Lippett.' Few responses are reported, apart from some tangible, comforting presents, until Judy makes independent decisions about her finances and her life outside the college, which is when 'Mr Smith' wields his power. Struggling to gain a mental picture of the dumb recipient of her messages, she challenges him, unsus-

¹⁶⁶ Webster, 1912/1995, 3–9; Karen Rosenberg, 'Daddy's Girl', *The Women's Review of Books* 10, Nos 10–11, July 1993, 23–24.

cessfully, to agree with or contradict her ideas of how he is and what he looks like. Phillips points out, quite correctly, how Judy creates both the man and herself when writing: in the process, I would add, she learns to take her own self seriously. Judy is thus more concerned with probing how she can extend the boundaries of her freedom of action than with learning to live within the sphere which is assigned to her as a woman, in the manner of most earlier college-story protagonists.¹⁶⁷

Soon Judy abandons her own first given name. Webster's device of making her settle for the unremarkable 'Judy' invites various explanations. It can be understood as being an attempt to cut off strings attached to memories of feeling abandoned and anonymous (the names given her at the orphanage, Jerusha Abbott, are attributed to a tombstone and a telephone directory respectively), whereas the student in her new environment is trying to develop into a person in her own right. At the same time the protagonist both acknowledges her bonds with the orphans, as in fact one of her charges used to call her Judy, and admits to her longing for an experience like that of the spoiled and carefree child she associates with the 'silly' name. It is easy to imagine that a girl in her situation would wish to avoid a feeling of being looked upon as the 'other' when she settles for a name as unobtrusive as 'Julia' 'and 'Sallie'. Temma F. Berg claims that Montgomery empowered Anne Shirley when she included a predilection for naming in her character. I would argue that Webster put Judy in an even stronger position than that of Anne, who names places and, on one occasion in an emotional letter to her best friend, herself, whereas Judy dares to confront her only security when she disregards the trustee's decisions by renaming him while also, autonomously, announcing her new identity at college: 'In the future please always address me as Judy.'¹⁶⁸

Many critics have drawn attention to the twofold image of the male character; Karen Alkalay-Gut is one of them, writing as follows:¹⁶⁹

By dividing her antagonist into two, Webster allows him to serve two contradictory functions – to be the sounding board for Judy as Daddy-Long-Legs and as Jervis to be dramatically changed by her. She can derive security and understanding from both but she can be influenced by neither: "Daddy" is silent and Pendleton has no authority over her life.

The protagonist's two names, Jerusha and Judy, bestow a similarly dual dimension on the letter-writer herself. The ways her messages are signed and

¹⁶⁷ Webster, 1912/1995, 9 and 14; Phillips, 1999, 73–74. On this point, Phillips refers to Marlene Schiwy, 'Taking Things Personally: Women, Journal Writing, and Self-Creation', *NWSA Journal* 6, 1994, 234–54.

¹⁶⁸ Webster, 1912/1995, 20; Temma F. Berg, 'Anne of Green Gables: A Girl's Reading', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Newsletter 9, 1984–85:4, 124–28 (126); L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* ((Boston: L.C. Page, 1908 and 1909; repr., Philadelphia: Courage Books, 1997), 127.

¹⁶⁹ Karen Alkalay-Gut, 'If Mark Twain Had a Sister: Gender Specific Values and Structure in *Daddy-Long-Legs*', *Journal of American Culture* 164, Winter 1993, 91–98 (95).

her two names employed make it evident what a sharp edge she is balancing on: on the one hand she illustrates the lonely outcast, on the other a college girl in the process of building up her integrity and self-confidence. A mere J. clearly indicates that she is in two minds, as when she is pouring out her memories of the 'poor-box' and is tangibly reminded that she, unlike the other college girls, has no caring parents. However, whenever Webster places her in a position in which she feels stingingly and severely returned to the old inferiority, that point is made when the letter is signed Jerusha. A change takes place when Judy jubilantly informs her 'daddy' that she is now an author. Having sold her first story, she ends her message with her official name, Jerusha Abbott. It no longer carries associations of an obedient, frustrated orphan; Judy is secure in her self-esteem, as college has simultaneously confirmed proven excellence in her academic results by awarding her a scholarship for the remaining two years. By this time Judy writes that she has gained a very determined 'cluck' and is no longer afraid of using it, flatly refusing to obey her benefactor when she is not convinced by arguments acceptable to her on intellectual and moral grounds. Moreover, she turns the tables by pointing to his flawed argumentation: 'You belong, Mr Smith, to a sex devoid of a sense of logic.'¹⁷⁰ In that comment she is no longer pliable; indeed she attributes to a man exactly what was generally held to be a typical characteristic of the 'weaker' sex.¹⁷¹ Judy no longer accepts the absent, male authority as her self-image is strengthened by experience by her reading of *Jane Eyre* (see below), and by the pride that accompanies a reward which is clearly a prize justly earned.

A point of reference in relation to which Judy's acceptance of herself is shown is the John Grier Home in which she spent her first eighteen years. For a long time Judy wants to forget about her childhood, remembering it as a 'long, sullen stretch of revolt'. She has been made to understand that she is 'impertinent' and has accepted that characterization, blaming any social deficiency on her upbringing and suggesting that being an orphan connotes poor conduct.¹⁷² Webster invested her with a desperate longing to be liked, combined with a realization that a happy and amusing person is more pleasing

¹⁷⁰ Webster 1912/1995, 27, 70, 42, 50, 90, 102, and 121–24. An interesting feature is how Judy, unaware of the relation between attractive Jervis Pendleton and comfortable Daddy-Long-Legs, invents another distinction: that between the Daddy-Long-Legs of her own creation and the evasive, remote 'Mr Smith', whose dictates she argues against or whose implied formality in those commands she makes attempts at emulating; 124, 126, 137–38.

¹⁷¹ The more common, and opposite, view is voiced in, for instance, Montgomery's *Anne's House of Dreams*, 173. An affectionate father figure, Captain Jim, expresses his appreciation that no unwomanly change of character has been wrought by higher education. Anne's alleged lack of logic thus clearly gives him satisfaction: 'You women are lovely critters Mistress Blythe, but you're just a mite illogical. You're a highly eddicated lady and Cornelia isn't, but you're like as two peas when it comes to that. I dunno's you're any the worse for it. Logic is a sort of hard, merciless thing.' Anne's alleged lack of logic thus clearly gives him satisfaction.

¹⁷² Judy comes back repeatedly to that characteristic: see 22, 27, and 43. The comment about her rebellious attitude is made much later, when she is in the process of analysing herself.

than a sad and troublesome one.¹⁷³ Judy's letters bear witness to her awareness that she owes her present situation to a humorous essay; they are filled to the brim with funny, informative remarks. When including desolate memories from her past, she is shown to feel the need to apologize afterwards. Judy's gradual acceptance of herself comes out in passages where she expresses her lifelong 'miserable feeling' of being outside a homogeneous group believing everyone else to be inside one: 'I'm a foreigner in the world and I don't understand the language.' One letter provides retrospective information: the first college year was experienced as if Judy was let in 'on sufferance'. Webster used the sophomore's close reading of *Jane Eyre* to explain her protagonist's development: identifying with fellow-orphan Jane's early experiences of life, Judy formulates a precise criticism of her own orphanage; it lacked empathy, individuality, and variety. When she is denied a vacation with the McBride family, the distressing loneliness she suffered as a child swamps her again, but only temporarily.¹⁷⁴ Her skills in analysing, gained not least from her wide reading, make her process the experience during the following summer.

The ensuing second stay at a farm and a subsequent visit to a class-mate's home cause her to reflect on her background. She finds that it was not exclusively unfavourable: in comparison, the countryside environment is distinctly narrow-minded whereas the rich, presumed well-bred New York family is described as superficial and shallow – from her new perspective, it actually seems more mentally restricted than the John Grier Home in which she grew up. At that point, she has gained the mature ability to re-evaluate her own experiences. A year later, the fully-fledged senior looks upon her past as an asset in her present, fortunate situation at college. Unlike the other students, who take everything for granted, Judy has learnt through the variety of reference points gained throughout her unusual upbringing that happiness must be fought for. That insight has helped her manage in the various fields of her college education. When, therefore, senior Judy visualizes the visiting day at the John Grier Home the first Wednesday in March, she sends her 'truly love' to that institution via her daddy trustee.¹⁷⁵

The classic liberal-arts education at an American college thus brings independence and self-assurance in *Daddy-Long-Legs*. Comparing Huckleberry Finn – the famous character invented by Jean Webster's mother's uncle Samuel Clemens (writing under his pseudonym Mark Twain) – and Judy

¹⁷³ Similarly, Sallie comments in *Dear Enemy* that orphans who smile (and show dimples) are the first to be picked out for new homes; Jean Webster, *Dear Enemy* (NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1915), 56.

¹⁷⁴ Webster, 1912/1995, 22, 92, 95, and 100.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 145 and 165–66.

Abbott, Karen Alkalay-Gut arrives at an intriguing conclusion: whereas Twain's character is generally thought to be liberated from 'the restraints of established society' because he rejects education, Alkalay-Gut claims that by making the maximum use of such an option, Webster's protagonist escapes a woman's defined and restricted role in society and actually gains the male prerogatives of individuality and self-fulfilment. Her point of departure is that American boys were expected to acquire an education and then take on male responsibility in society, while young American women were supposed to prepare for a limited role within the family.¹⁷⁶

The comparison limps, though; for one thing, Huckleberry Finn is a mere boy and Judy on the threshold of womanhood. Still, Alkalay-Gut's dichotomy is relevant: a college education at the time provided a woman with an otherwise unimaginable range of options for her future. Other fictional characters besides Judy see new vistas open to them because of their higher education. It is true that Judy's carefully detailed reform plans do not materialize in the narrative. Even so, they are substantial and well grounded in what she actually learns to understand in her education. She hands over the baton to Sallie in the sequel, *Dear Enemy*, in which college-graduate women are shown to work effectively and independently when reforming an old system.

Judy is not moulded into a tender and understanding character. In fact, the increasing insights she develops about herself and the world as a result of her liberal-arts education make her want to fight, not only for her own independence – economic as well as personal – but for that of other financially and socially underprivileged people as well, not least children growing up in the uninspiring kind of environment which formed her own background. Questioning long-established notions about womanliness, she claims her right to be treated as an individual, a salient feature in *Daddy-Long-Legs*. Contemplating her future, moreover, she refuses to admit that having a career would make her a different person. In addition, Judy is politically in favour of change: in her view, for instance, women ought to have the vote.

Judy's plans for the future are not revolutionary. At the relevant point in time many college-educated women supported themselves as writers, and her ideas for modernizing the orphanage in which she grew up are in line with what was generally felt to be the particular sphere of a woman graduate. Nevertheless, Webster's college story possesses more facets than other narratives in this genre. While other college stories focus on girl students adapting to demands from mothers, teachers, and peers, Webster showed how college may produce an independent and self-confident young woman without endangering her feminine attractiveness and her human appeal. In

¹⁷⁶ Alkalay-Gut, 91–98.

other words, Webster succeeded in combining a progressive view of women and society with her creation of a humorous, spontaneous protagonist caught up in a charming love story.

Future plans and occupations

Two fictional accounts published in 1884 equate a college education with fantastic careers for women. While Lizzie W. Champney enumerated a medley of astounding and exciting careers with which no later fictional text about college girls can compete,¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps supplied useful information about what was needed for a college girl who contemplated a leading position. A businesswoman in Phelps's story about 'A Brave Girl' claims to owe her success to college, even though she never graduated owing to financial distress. She holds forth about her experiences at her old institution, providing a substantial amount of advice. In the first place, she says, no college student is able to foresee which academic attainments will be important after graduation: knowledge of the subject she hated at the time, physics, turned out to be of decisive importance in her enterprise. When she began, needing advice and help, two things were seen to be in her favour. The first was that as she was college-educated, she was assumed to have 'habits of reading' and be used to 'order, and hours, and exactness, and hard work, and taught to be thorough'. The other was that she showed few signs of being 'girlish'. She advises her enthusiastic audience to develop grit and patience, and 'never cry before a man'.¹⁷⁸

Later books suggest fewer options for a graduate's future. At times, it is indicated that medicine is a good career for a college-educated woman, and as we saw above, Rosamund in *Two College Girls* contemplates it. Fiction, however, supplies diverse troubling perspectives on that future. A cautious attitude is expressed by an old woman in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*: whereas the protagonist's friend and admirer, Mr Cobb, thinks Rebecca will become 'somethin' remarkable – a singer, or a writer, or a lady doctor', his wife retorts that in her view women in medicine are no real professionals, although a woman actually runs a surgery in the vicinity.¹⁷⁹ A protagonist in Jessie M. Anderson's story about three freshmen attempts to gain approval for her professional dream by assuring her mother and friends that while she

¹⁷⁷ Lizzie W. Champney, *Three Vassar Girls in England* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1884), 223–28. This is one of Champney's series books.

¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 'A Brave Girl', *Wide-Awake*, 1884, vol. 18: 27–31, 105–11, 169–74, 237–41, 297–303, 361–65; vol. 19: 27–31, 92–96, 156–62 (19: 95 and 162).

¹⁷⁹ Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903; in *The Writings of Kate Douglas Wiggin*, vol. VI, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), 113.

does not support the 'woman's-rights line', she feels that a 'woman-doctor for little children would be the greatest treasure to a community.' Years later, another girl reflects on how happy she is that the then unmarried Ruth is a doctor who can treat her sister's little boy. Her comment rests on the conviction that a combination of motherhood and a medical profession is precluded: '[M]others can't make their children get well, can they?'¹⁸⁰

College stories also contain students who share the ambition of those who created college fiction, namely that of becoming a writer. Both Schwartz and Webster were Vassar graduates, but the women of letters they invented are miles apart. Judy is seen to learn the trade step by step in a sensible, non-emotional way, whereas the discussion of Ruth in *Elinor's College Career* dwells on her stereotyped 'artistic' characteristics rather more than on the development of her writing skills.

One field in which numerous graduates were employed at the time is school-teaching, and it is usually depicted in a distinctly forbidding manner. For example, Champney's laid-back graduate comments on her sad discovery of the 'patient but hopeless look' which teaching in a public school has brought to a Vassar friend.¹⁸¹ Though Montgomery's Anne is seen to enjoy working with school-children, a friend of hers vividly describes the dullness of teaching in a 'back-country' school. She is responsible for the instruction in no less than nine grades, but much to her irritation she hears that she draws her small salary for no real work.¹⁸² Indeed, even college teaching, seen from a faculty member's view, is presented as a torpid occupation in two Daskam stories mentioned above.¹⁸³ In *Beatrice Leigh at College*, a college teacher obviously regards high-school teaching as the worse alternative. The particular context, however, is primarily focused on the frustrating incompatibility of the options of either performing a woman's traditional duties in a warm family circle or securing an independent, though emotionally and socially barren, career which would satisfy intellectual and personal ambitions.¹⁸⁴

In college stories, departing seniors usually feel that they want to do something in order to honour their education and their *alma mater* quite apart from going into teaching. They are keen to use their wide knowledge and skills in attempts to improve conditions in American society in general. At the same time, several of them understand their families' expectation that they return to their homes and resume daughterly/sisterly duties – or make

¹⁸⁰ Anderson, 595–96.

¹⁸¹ Champney, 223–24.

¹⁸² Montgomery, 1915/1994, 79.

¹⁸³ Daskam, *Smith*, 'The Education of Elizabeth', 123–47, and Daskam, 1902.

¹⁸⁴ Schwartz, 1907, 'Victory', 331–37.

homes of their own by marrying. Either of these two options is usually thought to preclude the other. However, two stories in which the protagonists have graduated afford interesting perspectives on the career-versus-home-life issues.

The 'family claim'

In American college fiction, many girls feel it to be their duty either to support various relatives economically by working or to shoulder the burden of ordinary household chores in a family where the mother is exhausted, ill, or dead. Some three years before Webster's story about Judy appeared in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, that magazine printed a story about the experiences of a graduate whose mother suffers a nervous breakdown soon after her college-educated daughter's return to the family home.¹⁸⁵

Introducing her survey of the after-college story, Shirley Marchalonis claimed that this tale's typical plot and characters agreed with the attitude which prevailed in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, educated women being regarded as 'displaced persons'. The 'subtext', Marchalonis writes, 'advised putting them back, undoing their educations, and teaching them to be womanly again.'¹⁸⁶ It is true that many writers in that extremely popular monthly magazine argued along these lines. However, Marchalonis' contention seems exaggerated where this particular story is concerned. In my view, Hurd/Wilson managed to combine relevant aspects by problematizing the homecoming of a graduate in a story in which the attitudes of mother, father, sister, and brother are actually called into question.

This is the gist of the story: Barbara Grafton returns to her home-town in the West, which she ridiculed at college and still thinks 'raw' and 'crude'. She has missed the scholarship she counted on receiving, and her plans for the future are vague. When her mother falls ill, she takes the helm in a household with four younger children and a mostly absent father. Trying to work according to theories she learnt at college, Barbara fails miserably. Still, when she is actually offered the prized academic reward she turns it down. Gradually she becomes acclimatized to her family and community. When her mother returns, the girl has found that her particular gift lies in the particular kind of writing in which both Webster's Judy and Montgomery's Anne succeeded. And that is not all: she has gained valuable experience and can make a home function tolerably well.

The mother assumes responsibility on her return. Thus Barbara is tem-

¹⁸⁵ Marian Hurd Kent and Jean Bingham Wilson, 'When She Came Home from College: A Story of an American Home', *LHJ*, May 1909, 11, 12, 78, 79; June 1909, 13, 14, 48; July 1909, 16, 42, 43.

¹⁸⁶ Marchalonis, 163-65.

porarily freed from heavy responsibilities and able to plan her timetable, even her life, afresh. No suitor is lurking in the background: Barbara even pokes fun at the misconception of the word 'engaged' among the inhabitants in the little town.

The writers clearly criticize the views held by Barbara's father and her seventeen-year-old brother on the conditions universally imposed on women in general and a daughter in particular. Jack is drawn as a teasing, provocative, likeable, and amusing young man. He rests comfortably in his ingrained attitude to what he sees as a woman's occupations and duties. On Barbara's homecoming, he makes fun of her affected way of expressing herself and her condescending attitude to her home surroundings: considering the way she has turned out, he regrets that she will be forced to have a 'stultifying' life, 'unless, of course, we marry you off. There is always that alternative.' When Barbara has overcome many difficulties at home, we learn that her college education is of no consequence to her family; but they appreciate her practical efforts: 'A.B. stands for A Brick, instead of A. Bachelor'. Feeling no compunction, Jack sleeps until late in the morning, whereas Barbara's bad conscience is emphasized, for instance when she understands that the rest of the family had breakfast before she got up. Planning how the chores might be divided among the children, the protagonist automatically takes on cleaning Jack's room, whereas she imposes garden work on him. Although this story indicates that outside chores are indeed a man's domain, they are duties he is unwilling to accept. In the same way, though he sympathizes with Barbara in her moments of desolation, he is not seen to share any of her burdens, nor to regard them as responsibilities they should share. Jack is also the one who jokes about an 'angel in the house'. Barbara has had to take on a country girl whose only skill is that of milking cows. Finding the maid messing things up in the kitchen Jack declares – somewhat sourly – that he did accept that an 'angel' was neither intelligent nor beautiful, but he had hoped that she would at least know how to cook. Implicitly, his statement confirms his somewhat contradictory notions of what a woman should be like.¹⁸⁷

Jack's notions seem to owe a good deal to his father – portrayed as a competent physician – who is more succinct: 'Intellectual lights ought to be hidden under a ton, instead of a bushel, so it wouldn't be so easy to dig them out. If Barbara's genius was armed with a broom instead of a pen it would be better for her.'¹⁸⁸ This male character cannot wait to see the young woman forget ideas gained during her college years and revert to the state of mind

¹⁸⁷ Hurd/Wilson, May, 11; July 42; May 79.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, May, 12.

of the student he once saw off. The attitudes ascribed to the father are implicitly censured. Whereas he says he will assume responsibility when his wife is sent away to convalesce, he actually withdraws from his family. Mrs Grafton worries about the difficulties in store for the children and receives the following reply: “‘Oh, we’ll get along,’” assured the Doctor, in the old, illogical way that means nothing and yet is so comforting to a woman’, a narrator comment which indicates some disapproval of women’s passive acceptance of profoundly unsatisfactory conditions.¹⁸⁹ Another inconsistency on the Doctor’s part is seen in the different ways in which he looks on his wife and his daughter respectively. Mrs Grafton’s breakdown is accepted by him as being natural, partly due to Barbara’s four years of absence and partly to the alleged physical delicacy of his ‘brave’ and ‘bright’ spouse. The view ascribed to this father character is that untrained Barbara should be able to manage the same responsibilities for home and family. The implication must be that Barbara was of considerable help before college, although there is no indication that – at the same age – Jack is supposed to contribute, an attitude on which the sister starts to work. When Mr Grafton finds the meals served in the house sub-standard he eats elsewhere, with no consideration for his children and their welfare. Once Barbara has proved her merits, without any help whatsoever from him, he steps forward to congratulate his ‘housekeeper’.¹⁹⁰

The graduate arriving home regrets her missed chance of stretching herself intellectually by means of the scholarship. However, in contrast to most seniors in college fiction, she has made no plans for her life after college beyond simply going home. She was obviously not claimed back by her family, as the prospect of more advanced studies was open to her. The way she maintains how superior she feels towards the ‘world’, planning to impress an eagerly waiting audience with all that she learnt in theory at college, bespeaks both conceitedness and naïveté, indeed priggishness. Aiming to continue the college life she is used to, Barbara demands that the family adapt to her need for peace and quiet during fixed hours in the course of which she intends to produce scholarly essays. The abstract title of her first and only attempt – ‘The Spirit of the Eternal Ego’ – mocks a certain type of college assignments.¹⁹¹ Without consulting anyone, she also intends to organize philanthropy in the community, to systematize her mother’s work, to provide some aesthetic advice on colours and furniture, and to persuade her girlhood friend to start reading seriously. Jack’s comment on her proud attitude is not unfounded. Seeking no support when she launches her

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, July, 42.

¹⁹¹ The text does not supply any information about where Barbara plans to have her article published.

schemes, she introduces ill-considered ideas about chores to be performed and a vegetarian diet to be followed. Her whims result in painful repercussions, as she is initially quick to plan and systematize but gives no thought to possible consequences and reactions.

Barbara's character, however, is certainly shown to have been developed and her powers trained at college. That may be seen as one reason why she sticks to the hard work and actually reflects on her attitude, gradually adapting to prevailing circumstances. Barbara understands the necessity of looking at the duties which pile up for her as challenges to be overcome, not as mere tiresome occupations. At college, too, she occasionally ran her head against the wall. Slowly she realizes that she must go about her unpractised tasks as she did with theoretical assignments at college: they must be studied, experimented with, and adapted with guidance from experiences gained.

Barbara is of course represented as a character moulded by the society she grew up in. It is the narrator, and the ambiguous statements assigned to the men in the story, which question society's attitude to a gender-divided world. Barbara assumes the responsibilities she is expected to take on. The text describes her frustration and her gradual adaptation at length. However, her intellectual ambitions are not in fact thwarted by domestic claims. They were thwarted at college, where Barbara's academic results were not good enough to grant her extended access to advanced studies; subsequently editors reject her essays for professional reasons. Their response to her efforts is validated by the way in which – as Marchalonis has said – her attempts to write at home are 'gently mocked by the authorial voice'.¹⁹² Furthermore, when she is actually offered the coveted scholarship during the summer, neither father nor family is seen to demand that Barbara turn it down: indeed, she never asks their advice. Nor is her resolve related to the emergency of her little brother's illness, as Marchalonis maintains; this episode occurs later in the story.

An alternative scenario is in fact implied: some time before the letter from college arrives, Doctor Grafton suggests that the family be boarded with a neighbour when Barbara can find no hired helping hand. That would release Barbara from the family claim. Not sharing the news about the academic honour bestowed on her with anyone, Barbara refrains for some reason of her own from a chance of post-graduate studies. Nevertheless she is not domesticated, as she speaks up against many characters and even answers her father 'saucily' – an ambiguous word – towards the end.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Marchalonis, 163–65.

¹⁹³ Hurd/Wilson, July, 16; June, 48; July, 42.

Lynn D. Gordon characterizes 'When She Came Home from College' as a typical magazine story which emphasizes the importance of college girls learning 'humility and domesticity',¹⁹⁴ whereas Shirley Marchalonis stresses the humiliation inflicted on Barbara when she accepts her daughterly duties.¹⁹⁵ As the preceding pages suggest, I find the tale more complex and prefer to view it in relation to the various aspects of girls' education that were debated at the time.¹⁹⁶ In particular, the text offers ironic views on men's attitudes, on aspects of the 'womanly ideal', and on the priggishness of college girls. However, the story does not afford any insights into the lives of women as professionals who even manage to combine work with marriage. For such a radical synthesis we must turn to Jean Webster's last novel.

Social work

When Shirley Marchalonis arrived at the intriguing 'What happened afterwards' query in her analysis of college girls as delineated in fiction, she looked at many college stories, devoting special attention to *The Ladies' Home Journal* story presented above. She did not include Webster's *Dear Enemy*, however – a book which portrays female academics who seek freedom of action, choice, and thought away from their families; question 'the theory that a woman's only legitimate profession is home-making'; and appreciate the orphan girl who is independent and 'manly'.¹⁹⁷ Few of the book's reviewers pointed to the connection between higher education, which was the prerequisite for the position offered to Sallie, and the young woman's woes and joys working as the superintendent of Judy's former 'home'. Nor does Lynn D. Gordon's fact/fiction article 'The Gibson Girl Goes to College' mention Webster's novel, in which the traits and fate of the protagonist form a contrast to Gordon's characterization of the 'progressive era college women' as being a 'lost generation'.¹⁹⁸ Finally, in her overview of the writer and her output, Susan Sutton Smith does not associate her appreciation of the writer's 'practical' point of view with the fact that Webster was a college graduate.¹⁹⁹ Webster knew with what opinions and resources a higher education might

¹⁹⁴ Lynn D. Gordon, 'The Gibson Girl Goes to College: Popular Culture and Women's Higher Education in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920', *American Quarterly*, 39, 1987, 211-30 (220).

¹⁹⁵ Marchalonis, 165.

¹⁹⁶ Both Gordon (1987, 219-20) and Marchalonis (164) read more into the story than can actually be found in the text: for instance, the story is more entertaining than moving; Barbara's friend Susan did not interrupt her studies – she finished high school, without having to care for her family immediately after, because Barbara, the best friend, knows nothing of Susan's domestic responsibilities (furthermore, Barbara implies that Susan's intellect was not sharp enough for college); Barbara's early management certainly does not bear signs of efficiency, and it is the negative response her essays receive, more than the pressure on her at home, which diminishes her literary ambitions.

¹⁹⁷ Webster, 1915, 276 and 266.

¹⁹⁸ Gordon, 1987, 224.

¹⁹⁹ Susan Sutton Smith writes as follows about *Dear Enemy* in *American Women Writers: A Critical Guide*, 344-45:

have invested Sallie and her college friends, though, and these tools are shown to be of crucial importance when the graduates solve problems at the John Grier Home in a creative way.

Webster's books are discussed in Anne Kathryn Phillips's dissertation which, however, focuses on 'domestic transcendentalism'. Phillips points out that Webster's heroines show no 'predilection for submission' but evince determined self-reliance, which is eminently true of Judy in the earlier story as well as of Sallie. I find it odd, however, that Phillips does not connect her ideas of how 'Webster demonstrates the workings of a community [the orphanage] in which all members are enabled to grow into their potential together' with the writer's actual and Sallie's fictional experiences of another 'community' – college. As I have shown, college students, more than orphans actually, were, to quote Phillips, given 'appropriate work', met 'kindred spirits', and learnt to understand the 'potential to be useful', especially when living on campus in the progressive era.²⁰⁰ *Dear Enemy* was published in 1915. By then Jean Webster's fame was established, and the staged story about Judy filled theatres in the USA. Not surprisingly, Webster's new novel, advertised as a sequel to her earlier book, met with immediate success. Antisocial Robin/Sandy MacRae, with whom Sallie McBride was grappling – alongside some hundred orphans, a problematic staff, an impatient beau, and a crusty trustee – was 'the enemy most people read about'.²⁰¹

Like *Daddy-Long-Legs*, the story about the inexperienced superintendent is an epistolary novel. Apart from the odd letter of thanks from the protagonist's favourite orphan Sadie, Sallie is the sender, addressing Judy and/or her husband, the 'enemy', and an attractive suitor. The last two characters epitomize two opposing possibilities for a woman when it comes to choosing her situation in life. The suitor, a politician, admires the characteristics of an outstanding hostess, whose best efforts should in his view be invested in him and his occupation. Therefore he looks upon Sallie's demanding enterprise as a ridiculous whim: when they become engaged he expects her to leave as soon as possible and devote all her time and energy to him and their shared household. In a final quarrel, he describes her undertaking as one of the 'damned modern ideas about public service and woman's mission and all the rest of the tomfoolery the modern generation of women is addicted to'. The alternative Webster provided her main character with, the dour doctor,

'Once again, a potentially sentimental story is saved from stickiness by the practical point of view and the lively prose of its narrator.'

²⁰⁰ Phillips, Anne Kathryn, 'Domestic Transcendentalism in the Novels of Louisa May Alcott, Gene Stratton-Porter, and Jean Webster' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Connecticut, UMI Ann Arbor, 1993), 9–10, 180–81.

²⁰¹ Hart, James D., *The Popular Book* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1950), 226.

grows gradually more attractive to Sallie. Though society at large questioned the idea of a working wife, it is the future she happily looks forward to in the company of Sandy: 'marriage *and* work that [both of them] love' (emphasis added).²⁰²

Webster added a foil to the triangle Sallie – Gordon – Sandy. While Jervis Pendleton is shown to understand that shallow and prejudiced Gordon is the wrong man for college-educated Sallie, the protagonist herself dismisses the fiancée – 'a silly little thing, all eyes and ear-rings and fuzzy hair' – of a young man who helps out at the orphanage. Both the girl and Sallie break off their engagements; the young man then grows attached to Sallie's graduate friend, whom Sallie considers independent, responsible, and eminently able. In this case, too, a combination of marriage and work is implied.²⁰³

Those relationships make up one theme in Webster's story. Another concerns individualism. A major incentive for college-story writers was the challenge of presenting students as discrete characters: generally the undergraduates are shown to have widely different backgrounds and personalities. Abundant examples demonstrate that the young women detest the way in which general opinion lumped every 'college girl' together with all others, making one stereotyped concept of them all. In *Dear Enemy* Webster attempted to deinstitutionalize an environment whose major characteristic was uniformity, symbolized by the blue gingham, and in which an 'orphan' was an even more indistinct phenomenon than a college girl: when Sallie arrives, she is confronted with 'dough-faced little inmates that haven't the slightest resemblance to human children'. One of Sallie's main tasks, as she sees it, is to allow the uniqueness of each child to shine through. When the novel ends, Sallie has succeeded in arousing the orphans' 'initiative, responsibility, curiosity, inventiveness, fight', qualities which were dormant in the children whom she depicted as lethargic and 'listless' on her arrival. Judy's academic training and social education at college helped to ensure her self-knowledge and independence in *Daddy-Long-Legs*. Similarly, Sallie develops from the moment when she assumes responsibility for the John Grier Home, and so do her wards because of the training and challenges to which she exposes them.²⁰⁴

Even though Sallie is furious with her predecessor, whom she regards as having been primarily interested in making a living, harbouring 'no slightest sense of service to society' when running the institution, she realizes the importance of good remuneration for hard and dedicated work, especially in the social field which was rapidly changing from voluntarism and charity to

²⁰² Webster, 1915, 338 and 347.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 217 and 333–34.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 16 and 9–11.

professionalism. She warns the Pendletons that the first college acquaintance she hires 'might stay if we pay her a big enough salary'. After a period of probation, Sallie gratefully acknowledges the news that Betsy is employed on a permanent basis and that her salary has been raised. The superintendent hotly defends this decision to a trustee, whose conventional attitude resembles that of the belligerent king in *The Princess*: in his opinion, Betsy's family can and ought to support her when she is involved in what was traditionally seen to be charitable work, sometimes undertaken by ladies of leisure. To this Sallie retorts: 'You don't furnish legal advice for nothing ... Why should she furnish her trained services for nothing ... [doing] work which is undertaken for the public good'.²⁰⁵ The fact that Jean Webster included this discussion in her novel, making Sallie write at length about it to Judy (and by extension to Jervis Pendleton), is noteworthy. Not only does Sallie's quarrel with the pompous trustee present a woman graduate's work in an orphanage as a type of professional employment; the level of the woman's salary is seen as an important issue with a direct bearing on the position of women in the labour market. There are reasons for believing that this incident in *Dear Enemy* will have struck contemporary audiences as bold; for instance, Linda L. Mather refers to an article of 1905 according to which 'women are not assertive and do not claim money as their main reason for working'.²⁰⁶

Sallie certainly learns to apply the qualities of leadership she practised as class president. Similarly, her academic studies shine through in her daily work. The impeccable logic used in the argument about Betsy's salary demonstrates that Sallie is trained in rhetoric. College stories in fact abound in hints of such learning and training. Sallie's way of structuring a speech is one example, though a set of tips from her fiancé, the career politician, also helps. Similarly, a college student would learn to organize her different obligations and assignments. When Judy inundates her intimate friend with letters and telegrams full of various wishes, Sallie coolly lines them up, realizing that everything cannot be done at the same time. Necessary tasks are isolated and graded in order of their estimated urgency. Judy's repeated desire for new, non-gingham, clothes for the children is in fact postponed until much later than Sallie promises: 'In about a month I shall be ready to consider the question, but just now their insides are more important than their outsides'.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 188, 38, and 181.

²⁰⁶ Linda L. Mather, 'The Education of Women: Images from Popular Magazines' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 93. She refers to M.E. Blood, 'New England Graduates', *The Arena* 23, August, 1900, 214–24.

²⁰⁷ Webster, 1915, 81, 196, and 32.

At college, physiology and hygiene were rubbed into the freshmen. At the John Grier Home, bathtubs for daily use are consequently introduced – though not received with joy by the children – as is extensive access to fresh air both day and night. This innovation is resisted by some women on the staff, as are Sallie's revolutionary ideas on varied food, and the occasional treat, for the children. Committee work filled a large part of the students' free time; likewise, committees are organized inside and outside the orphanage to create better conditions in the John Grier Home. Sallie introduces a form of self-government to make the children more independent and responsible; and she makes field trips and afterwards introduces a mentor system which aims at inculcating social and emotional stability. The children are made responsible for money, for varied chores, for gardening, and for pets, sometimes of unconventional kinds. In many ways Sallie turns the orphanage upside down, confirming the outraged view of higher education for women, articulated by her friend Helen's family on the latter's divorce: 'It all comes from sending her to college and letting her read such dreadful modern people as Ellen Key and Bernard Shaw.'²⁰⁸

In the midst of all practical problems and tasks, college graduate Sallie separates brain-work from practical chores. For instance, she considers attendance to the records of the children as being one of the most '*intelligent* needs'. Furthermore, she takes pride in being college-educated, sharply rejecting the doctor's notion that she has taken an 'unintelligent stand' when reproving him over a particularly insolent outburst of his. When the doctor compliments her on her almost masculine 'ability of grasping the whole of a question and going straight to the point', she reacts in a similar way against his self-righteous assumption that a capacity of that kind is restricted to the male sex. She proves her intellectual ability when she studies all the scientific books the same physician heaps upon her. The fact that he actually suggests such reading to her indicates that he trusts her academic training. Liberal-arts graduate Sallie responds by proposing books of her own choice for the medical specialist to enjoy. Modern literature is an interest of hers: she cannot wait to read H.G. Wells, and she recommends *Gösta Berlings Saga* to the Pendletons.²⁰⁹

Sallie learns to accept and appreciate the trust which is bestowed on her, aware that Judy knows from college what 'executive ability' and 'common sense' her friend possesses. In *Dear Enemy*, it is apparent how a college education encourages the build-up of an intricate network of former students. Jervis Pendleton, principal of an orphanage in need of a new superintendent,

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 27, 62, 89, 104, and 127.

discusses a substitute with his wife who suggests a college friend, very capable though inexperienced. When Sallie begins to find her feet, she discovers some assignments which must be executed. Running across a graduate who proved her capability in spare-time activities as leader of the glee club and president of dramatics, Sallie decides to engage her on the spur of the moment. In sore need of extra help after a fire has destroyed the old Home, Sallie remembers another college girl she recently chatted with at the 'Women's University Club', a crucial water-hole for educated females. That graduate, she remembers, once stepped in for a failed president and 'whipped' an important senior committee into shape; Sallie contacts her about the emergency in which a woman of such character and skills is needed, and Helen comes at once. Sallie's comment about the 'heaven-sent relief' academic employees bring her testifies to the vast difference she perceives between educated and non-educated staff: the graduates can be trusted to assume complete responsibility for the work delegated to them, which is an unusual experience for Sallie who has been used to reminding or supervising other members of staff. *Dear Enemy* hence makes it apparent how college women rely on, support, and benefit from one another.²¹⁰

Different aspects of college education thus form an undercurrent in Webster's last novel. Pendleton made a fairy-tale development possible for Judy in *Daddy-Long-Legs* by moving her to an unknown and demanding environment. In the sequel, Sallie cannot resist the challenge offered her. She journeys back to where Judy originates from, which is a similarly foreign locality and atmosphere for Sallie. In both cases the shock of unfamiliarity evokes latent skills and traits. Like Judy at college, Sallie gratefully understands how she is involved in a continuous process of learning, so that 'when each Saturday night comes I look back on the Sallie of last Saturday night, amazed at her ignorance.'²¹¹

The message contained in that reflection concurs with the definition that Sanford was to formulate of a college-educated person in the best sense. Sallie respects learning. Growing committed to her work, she discovers resources within herself that she was unaware of, and she realizes that she cannot ever go back to her earlier, unproblematic and undedicated lifestyle. Sallie believes firmly in the individual and his/her right to fulfilment. At the same time, the portrait Webster drew of her superintendent agrees with Marion Talbot's contentions. Sallie's first priority is with a good domestic environment; throughout the novel she trains her children in individual responsibility for the well-being of

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19, 275, and 49.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

both people and places. Finally, Webster shows how matrimony and work may be united. Marrying Sandy, Sallie may continue to feel how she develops day by day in her work and in fruitful conversation with her husband.

And so my investigation into the ways in which higher education is presented in women's college fiction has come to an end. In one way, we are back at the beginning: Rosamund in *Two College Girls* believed she would be able to combine marriage with professional work, and Webster showed in fiction, as well as in her own life, that it could be done. But Jean Webster towers over the other writers of women's college fiction. In my opinion the individual development of a college student towards what may indeed be termed strong-mindedness in *Daddy-Long-Legs*, and the radical arguments in *Dear Enemy* in support of academic women's professionalism, remuneration, and ambitions, bring new aspects into the genre. Because they mature as individuals owing to their college education while retaining those feminine characteristics which they themselves appreciate, I find in the portraits of Sallie and Judy much of that 'not like to like, but like in difference' ideal with which Tennyson's *The Princess* ends.

Concluding remarks

‘My four years there made life worth living.’

A graduate in *Bryn Mawr Stories*, 32.

This book has presented various images of women’s higher education found in college stories written from the 1880s to the 1910s, the dynamic period during which women’s colleges gained acceptance. Several of the concerns which were hotly debated at the time seem strangely familiar still: for instance, new institutions for higher education are frequently invested with the expressed aim of recruiting students from environments in which academic education – as was the case for many college girls – is not taken for granted. Similarly, the problem of how to combine home and children with parents’ professional careers or research has still not been solved in a satisfactory manner. Besides, the femininization of the teaching profession on all levels is frequently on the agenda today, as is the question of vocational specialization versus a broad as well as advanced intellectual education.

In the period on which my study focuses, girls and academic studies made up a dubious combination in many quarters. Old anxieties prevailed regarding the allegedly harmful influence of higher education on female students. A new and completely different worry was added to them by the turn of the twentieth century. It was then possible to adopt a perspective on academic studies for women, and faculty members claimed that they perceived a change of attitude in that period’s large group of undergraduates. The students were said to care more for various campus activities than for scholarly endeavours or the improvement of women’s subordinate position, whereas the first few students had been ambitious and eager on these latter points. Scholars maintain that the progressive period therefore formed a dividing line between a forward movement in the struggle for women’s liberation and a backlash in that struggle. Some academics have argued that college-fiction writers actively supported the tendency towards complacency over the restricted position of women.

As I have shown in my analysis of women’s college stories, I do not share

that view. After reading a spate of college narratives and a large amount of other material, I have become convinced that women college writers in the period were keenly aware of the various anxieties voiced at the time. Though patently disturbed by and annoyed with these anxieties, college-story authors usually make their characters handle them in pragmatic ways. Some writers bring up the discrepancy between ideal and actual conditions in academic education, as well as irritation with attitudes to college women. Senior fictional characters, for instance, often speak about issues of this nature, deploring the way in which people at large regard college students and graduates.

Moreover, I have been struck by the apparent ambition of the writers to present a variety of perspectives on students, faculty members, and the elements they regarded as part of the college education. The college girls in these stories are seldom flat stereotypes who fail to develop in the course of their studies. Various kinds of characters offer the possibility of personal identification as readers learn about reactions and solutions to individual ethical problems, wider moral issues, and ways to proceed with academic studies, all of which involve areas closely connected to ideas as to what higher education should achieve.

By and large, college-story characters are shown to feel that they have benefited from their academic experiences. These benefits are mainly seen to operate on the level of individual gratification. The significance of those experiences for a young woman's future, however, is not immediately apparent; a typical women's college novel will end with the graduation ceremonies. While many turn-of-the-century academic women outside the pages of college fiction expressed frustration over the few possibilities that existed for graduates when it came to utilizing their wide knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities, fictional seniors generally look to the future with confidence. Even though they contain no strong and radical arguments – for instance pertaining to women's suffrage – the tales nevertheless embody some criticism against prevailing conditions in society which restricted women's freedom of action.

Basically, my work concentrates on two aspects. One concerns contemporaneous opinions on what were considered appropriate behaviour and occupations for young women and the impact of these opinions on the organization of educational activities, in fact and fiction. The other is focused on matters pertaining to academic education *per se*, both with regard to what and how college girls studied and in respect of the social education which the specific campus environment necessarily entails. I have been struck by how diversified the college books are, despite the frameworks being very much

the same. The various writers of college fiction undoubtedly aimed at informing readers about higher education at an all-female institution; the stories are certainly didactic, and they focus on the beneficial interplay between characters. Nevertheless, one devotes more space than others to real classroom activities; another details the woes and joys which leaders of committee and club-work face; still another presents girl characters who are no longer immensely grateful just to be able to take part in a college education, but insist that the boundaries of student life and individual responsibility be stretched. All stories describe or hint at some frolics; but the characters are certainly not represented as fun-loving stereotypes, a cliché-ridden notion found in some present-day academic works on college fiction.

College fiction is not radical; but nor are the students drawn as the 'soft and milky' female characters with whom Princess Ida equates womankind in Tennyson's *The Princess*. While confrontation, victory, and defeat characterize the issue of women and higher education in Tennyson's poem, college fiction is more concerned with the advantages of 'balance'. Intellectual endeavours are put on a par with strenuous efforts in sport competitions and responsible work in student organizations. It is often pointed out that a 'round' mixture is beneficial. A clear head and an understanding heart are equally important. Towards the end of the period, sentimental overtones when characters' feelings and reactions are described are exchanged for manifestations of true grit and good sense. Jokes and playfulness counterbalance severe mental effort, and intellectual challenges and hard-hitting teacher comments are combined with nonsensical prattle and comforting words among peers. Time and again, college stories recommend that an equilibrium be struck between the extremes of the grind and the butterfly – between time devoted to studies and to social or competitive activities.

On the whole, this type of fiction integrates information about intellectual training, physical exercise, and social intercourse with a plot focusing on growth, self-knowledge, and character development. Some general patterns and ideas bind the stories together: students from different backgrounds with dissimilar personalities are forced to share living quarters, influencing one another as a consequence; mathematics epitomizes intellectual difficulty as well as academic prowess; and compulsory writing is described as an ever-present demand, often yielding beneficial results. A gradual development from *Two College Girls* to *Daddy-Long-Legs* can be discerned. In Brown's book, for instance, the faculty is in the foreground, but in Fuller's and Schwartz's novels faculty members gradually become less and less visible in the girls' lives until, in Webster's *Daddy-Long-Legs*, the professors are not seen to take any personal interest in their students. In the same manner,

male and female lecturers are initially delineated in a gendered way, women characters being morally and emotionally involved with their students in 'mother-daughter relationships', whereas their male colleagues are seen to be 'only' intellectually sharp. These gender differences grow less pronounced by and by. In early college fiction the setting is confined to the college itself, supplemented by limited background information; but Webster devotes a considerable proportion of the pages in *Daddy-Long-Legs* to places outside campus which are unfamiliar to Judy and in which she applies her skills from college and continues her learning process.

College is usually shown to produce confident and sensible women. The day a senior graduates, she has not only gained knowledge and skills: as a rule, she has also gone through a change of character, of attitude, and of general outlook. In some respects, she may have acquired feminine qualities which her family had failed to instil in her. *Two College Girls*, *Across the Campus*, and *Elinor's College Career*, for instance, contain girls who make sacrifices in favour of other students. At the same time, however, Fuller's Christine retains a stubborn pride which is shown to be a good characteristic at times. One feature apparent in all college stories is the importance of campus life and of the effective mental training practised among peers outside classrooms. Society at large dreaded three kinds of college girls: the grind, the butterfly, and the bluestocking. The first two types are more common characters in fiction than the last one, and instances of their benefiting from one another to reach a feminine compromise are innumerable. While college girls may not develop much in the short stories, for obvious reasons, protagonists in the novels are thus gradually broken out of bad habits: a priggish grind learns the importance of social graces; a condescending and patronizing girl student is taught to see beyond her social class; a cheat realizes the hidden moral code among college girls; and a social success is admonished to take her academic work seriously if she is to be respected by the other students.

In the progressive period Jean Webster made senior Patty question the mode of life expected from a society woman. She then continued with orphaned Judy who gradually learnt to speak her own mind, winning respect for it, and ended with graduate Sallie running an institution while finding moral and professional support within a network of alumnae instead of from members of her family. Judy and Sallie in Webster's narratives begin to reflect on their situations and take on personal responsibilities. They prove ready for action in society while retaining individual characteristics, some masculine but others expressly and strongly feminine from a traditional point of view. In Judy's case, progress into a self-assured person who grows

to like her own self takes place as a result of healthy challenges at college, and in *Dear Enemy* Sallie's college education is seen to have invested her with the mental and intellectual instruments she needs when assuming command.

There were contradictory ideas as to what higher education should aim to achieve both in college fiction and in society at large, and fictional girl students are represented as being extremely well aware of a general, suspicious attitude to educated women. College writers often point out, again particularly in the short stories, that successful graduates attempt to hide their analytic skills and thorough knowledge behind a bland womanly exterior. Similarly, the earlier college writers seem to have been wary of allowing their characters the choice of deciding how to live their lives after college. Family claims loom above the girl characters. If such obligations make them leave college prematurely, they feel depressed; but they usually accept these claims with no hard feelings.

Of the writers included in this project, Jean Webster and L.M. Montgomery were the most successful ones in terms of sales figures and general attention. While Montgomery's work has been thoroughly investigated and commented on, few scholars have analysed Webster's books. The two novels about college student Judy and graduate Sallie affirm a marked development on the part of the protagonists, a development which leans more towards individuality and a strong belief in themselves and their capabilities than the patterns seen in the earlier stories. At the same time, the focus on self-knowledge in Webster's stories is coupled with an adherence to the various ideas addressed by Tennyson in *The Princess*: the main characters Judy and Sallie combine good humour and easy-going manners with intellectual stringency, an interest in cosy interior decoration with cold logic and argumentation, and a predilection for beauty and harmony in colours with a strong disinclination for subordination. The two characters retain feminine characteristics of their own choice, refuse to assimilate others with which they cannot comply, and acquire some qualities which were regarded as exclusively male. In both stories, all characters are seen from the respective protagonist's point of view. From the ways in which the men are presented by the main characters, a reader realizes that Judy does not resemble Jervis in character, nor does Sallie mirror Sandy; they are not 'like to like'. The men guide their future partners; still, the women characters do not passively accept the superiority of their male counterparts. Judy is seen to argue strongly for her views and go against her benefactor's decisions, while Sallie introduces her doctor to the reading of quality fiction. In each of these two couples, the partners come close to the Tennysonian ideal of being 'like in difference'.

While indicating the feasibility of an integration of feminine traits with intellectual education, individual self-realization, and insistent strong-mindedness, Webster also relied on the basic framework of earlier college novels: like them *Daddy-Long-Legs* informs its readership about studies and campus life in general. But whereas such factors had been thoroughly described in stories published before 1912, Webster merely hinted at them. For instance, she only had to indicate that her protagonist has ‘cracked the code’ of examinations: when she wrote her tale, it was no longer necessary to supply the specific advice on how students were instructed and prepared which her predecessors had provided for their readers.

Whereas stories produced from 1886 onwards described college education as an experience *per se*, Webster’s last novel, *Dear Enemy*, introduces a graduate who continues to learn – from experience but also, as in college, by means of extensive studies on subjects relevant to her profession. In Sallie, too, Jean Webster portrayed a woman who made an independent choice between a comfortable society marriage and a way of life which promised a combination of marriage and career. As *Dear Enemy* was a top-ten novel when it comes to sales, there is reason to assume that her readers found that combination attractive, which suggests that it was coming to be seen as possible. Thus, towards the end of the period investigated in this study, those apprehensions regarding girls and higher education in an enclosed environment away from home which were mentioned in chapter one are seen to evaporate in college fiction, after thirty years of experimenting in the genre.

It has been fascinating to enter the world of higher education as it was presented in fiction and non-fiction a century ago. To anyone who thinks about academic education at any time, what first springs to mind is the cultivation of brains and the development of individual talents by means of hard intellectual work. Reading these early college stories, I have been impressed with the academic education presented there: fictional college girls of a hundred years ago encounter tenets which include an aspiration to original thought, ideally born out of discussions featuring ‘great’ questions and opposing beliefs; and they go on excursions that are integrated with course texts and aimed at encouraging students to draw conclusions and argue for their views. Above all, college stories provide many examples of the importance of student involvement in extra-curricular activities: much of the fictional characters’ favourable development is due to their devoting time and energy to performances, formal and informal debates, peer discussions, college magazines, and committees, in which many of them take on heavy responsibilities to provide entertainment for the student body and to improve conditions at the institution for which they come to feel affection

and pride. In fact, college fiction implies that the famous 'atmosphere' at college is created by the girls themselves when, at best, they manage to combine and integrate demanding academic work with dedicated participation in the bustling life on campus. Being part of that genial campus atmosphere is shown to be essential. I would argue that these narratives formed part of the lively discussion in the course of which views for and against higher education for girls were exchanged and that tantalizing mystery, young women's life at college, was explained. Although they did not contain much in the way of practical suggestions on how a girl graduate might utilize her higher learning, college stories repeatedly maintained that college prepared young women for life. The statement which serves as an epigraph for these final remarks is still open to readers to interpret and define.

Appendix

What follows are the titles of college fiction, in chronological order, that I have come across in my investigation.¹ Most of them are probably not very widely known, and they are therefore briefly introduced, apart from a few which I only know by name. Male college stories are marked with *. I have also indicated what publications are classified as being 'series books' intended for young readers, girls and boys respectively.²

* 1876

Tripp, George Henry, *Student-Life at Harvard* (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks).

In his foreword, the writer states that he intends to depict college as it was in the sixties. Sports are not the main issue in the story. Studies and faculty come to the fore, but not in an attractive way: 'digs', the men who devote their time to studies, are little esteemed. Furthermore, the students consider instructors their enemies.

1884

Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart, 'A Brave Girl', *Wide-Awake*, vol. 18: 27–31, 105–11, 169–74, 237–41, 297–303, 361–65; vol. 19: 27–31, 92–96, 156–62.

¹ The following titles are no American college stories, although the titles seem to indicate it: Anna Chapin Ray, *Ursula's Freshman* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1903); Laura Lee Hope, *The Outdoor Girls of Deepdale* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1913); and Henry Davidson Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs* (New York: Appleton, 1901, repr. New York: Arno, 1969). Lizzie Williams Champney's many books about Vassar graduates of the first generation are guide-books rather than college fiction, though some references are made to college and the characters' education (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1884–92). The protagonist in Hamlin Garland's *The Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* (New York: Harper, 1895) is a graduate, but her education at a Wisconsin university is merely touched upon. Edward F. Benson's *The Babe, B.A.* (London and New York: Putnam's, 1896) is set at the University of Cambridge in England, though it is included in the University Series together with *Harvard Stories* and *Yale Yarns*.

² For further references about juvenile series books, see *Girls Series [sic] Books: A Checklist of Titles Published 1840–1991* (University of Minnesota Libraries, 1992) and Alan S. Dikty, *The American Boys' Books Series Bibliography 1895–1985* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 1986), from which I have gathered much information. Shirley Marchalonis and Sherrie A. Inness discuss several of the former volumes in *College Girls* and *Intimate Communities* respectively.

The serialized story, possibly the first one to depict the influence of a college education, opens with the protagonist in her second junior term at college. When her father dies, she takes on the responsibility for her mother and younger brother. She tries some accepted, womanly occupations and then apprentice work as a telegraph operator, but strikes success when she combines the making of preserves with administrative talent, both of which capabilities she attributes to her college education.

1886

Brown, Helen Dawes, *Two College Girls* (Boston: Ticknor).

Edna, an only child after her two sisters have died, decides to go to college. A fellow student befriends her, and the novel depicts their experiences. At Commencement she agrees to marry the brother of her friend. Brown's story concentrates on different aspects of life at a college for women. Vivid and detailed scenes from seminars are included.

1890

Hale, Edward Everett, 'Susan's Escort', *Harper's Magazine* 80, May, 908–18.

The story is the only one about female college students/graduates written by a man in my study. Mostly the plot is woven around the vulnerable position of a single woman who wants to be culturally active in society.

*** 1894**

Wood, John Seymour, *College Days: or Harry's Career at Yale* (New York: Outing).

In his preface, the writer states that he bases his story on recollections from twenty years earlier. It was serialized in *The Outing Magazine* 1891–93. Yale is said to teach its students to work diligently. The story takes a pessimistic view of the future for characters interested in academic learning: the only thing that will matter is making money. Protagonist Harry 'helps' his friend by cheating for him during the entrance examinations; the friend in his turn helps Harry into business after college.

1895

Goodloe, Abbe Carter, *College Girls* (New York: Scribner's).

The fourteen stories, written by a Wellesley graduate, have different main characters. Some of them portray girls who choose to marry instead of continuing in education or careers. The clash between the womanly woman and the 'manly' female student/graduate is evident, although some stories poke fun at this prejudice. Some of the stories were serialized in *Scribner's Magazine* 17, 1895.

1895

Anderson (Chase), Jessie M., 'Three Freshmen: Ruth, Fran, and Nathalie', *St. Nicholas' Magazine*, January-May, 191-95, 326-32, 392-96, 504-07, 592-96.

Like *Daddy-Long-Legs* and others, the story was serialized before publication. Three girls meet as freshmen at Smith. One short scene stages a lesson in rhetoric. The abrupt ending looks at the girls' future lives. One is unmarried and a post-graduate in medicine. Another had to leave college because her father lost his money; she is now married, as is the third whose husband is a cousin of the doctor's.

* 1895

Beers, Henry A., *The Ways of Yale in the Consulship of Plancus* (New York: Holt).

* 1895

Post, Waldron Kintzing, *Harvard Stories: Sketches of the Undergraduate* (New York: Putnam's).

Betting on horses, football, and clay-pigeon-shooting are major activities described in the stories. The students also go to plays and admire women actors. A reader receives presumably experienced advice about how to manage written examinations, but there is also a strong message to the effect that a college education is wasted on an American male youth, who needs to make money afterwards.

* 1895

Wood, John Seymour, *Yale Yarns: Sketches of Life at Yale University* (New York: Putnam's).

In his preface, the writer explains the many difficulties of writing a college story. The writer's aim was to play down sports; in his opinion they dominated in the daily press, although few students took part actively. The stories are mostly about pranks. A minor character is a Vassar student who is asked if she learned wrestling at that institution.

* 1895

Williams, Jesse Lynch, *Princeton Stories* (New York: Scribner's).

The different stories tell about student larks and include irresponsible young men living above the allowance granted them from home. One story describes how a young tutor is coldly received by students and faculty alike, and how he reacts against the Puritan President.

* 1895

Anonymous, 'A Manly Retreat', *The New York Times*, 10 March, 30.

A Latin tutor is enamoured of the same girl as a rich and spoilt student. The two men fight and the tutor has to leave the college (and the girl) because the student's father is a possible donor.

1896

French, Lillie Hamilton, 'A College Engagement', *Harper's Bazar* 29, 29 August, 729.

A male graduate leaves the college town, breaking an engagement with a local young woman. An older woman sharing that experience advises the girl on how to handle it.

1896

Johnson, Mrs Clarke, *Her College Days* (Philadelphia: Penn).

The story is more about the close relationship between a mother and her daughter than about college experiences. Its moral and religious aspects are quite in line with the norms in conduct books for girls. The girl is a paragon student, younger than the other undergraduates, praised by her professors especially in geometry and Greek; she is also prominent in music, basketball, and dramatics.

* 1896

Barnes, James, *A Princetonian: A Story of Undergraduate Life at the College of New Jersey* (New York: Putnam's).

In the preface, Barnes emphasizes the Princeton 'spirit'. The novel opens with a clerk listening to a group of Glee Club singers and being persuaded that he should go to college. He meets a young woman who inspires the 'best part of him', and therefore he manages well in studies as well as in sports. During vacations, he learns about another kind of life working on roads and running a juvenile boarding-house. To be appreciated by students, a professor is shown to need enthusiasm, professionally as well as socially. The volume contains advertisements for other college stories, such as *Harvard Stories* and *Yale Yarns*.

* 1896

Hyde, William DeWitt, 'His College Life', *Scribner's Magazine* 19, June, 721-34.

Letters from an undergraduate to his mother about religion, his father about business and socialist doctrines, and his beloved Helen, his lodestar;

she intends to work at a college settlement, but instead agrees to marry the young man when he graduates.

* 1897

Flandrau, Charles Macomb, *Harvard Episodes* (Boston: Copeland and Day).

In one story, a student discusses with a graduate what a young man should do to be accepted into coveted groups. The older man rejects the idea that an American college is a democratic institution. To be admitted into the various groups, it is clear that a student has to know influential people. The different narratives are fairly satirical, towards students as well as faculty members and mothers.

1898

Goodloe, Abbe Carter, 'Was It Her Duty', *The Ladies Home Journal*, August, 9–10; September, 8.

College education is described as being of a predominantly moral and poetical character. A young woman reluctantly acts according to the high principles of her institution. References to Tennyson's *The Princess* and its setting of beauty and enchantment permeate the story. No academic education is referred to.

* 1898

Sanderson, James Gardner, *Cornell Stories* (New York: Scribner's).

The first story focuses on college societies competing for new members among the freshmen. When Sanderson's characters graduate, he invests them with the same awed feelings as are often described in women's college stories.

* 1898

Ketchum, Arthur, *et al.*, *Williams Sketches*, ed. by Herbert J. Lehman and Isaac H. Vrooman Jr. (Albany, New York: J.B. Lyon, printer).

The stories were written by undergraduates who describe a college education as being tough but beneficial – as a process where boys are turned into able men with 'a sort of superficial polish that people call college training'. College is depicted as a democratic place where a student learns more from the society he keeps than from the academic education.

* 1899

Williams, Jesse Lynch, *The Adventures of a Freshman* (New York: Scribner's).

The protagonist is a farmer's son who, supported by his mother (but not

his father), works and saves money to go to college. He has the best of intentions, begins by studying hard, and succeeds at sports; but when asked to manage a club of prominent class fellows he is drawn into their habit of working little and gambling more. He gets some unexpected help, manages to pay back heavy debts, and comes back in the autumn – more experienced and dedicated than a year before.

1899

Schwartz, Julia Augusta, *Vassar Studies* (New York: Putnam's).

The stories take up actual work and learning, together with the students' aspirations and attitudes. 'Danger' contains a long list of pros and cons pertaining to college education for girls. Another story, 'The Ghost of her Senior Year', shows how one character is moulded during the four years.

1899

Fuller, Caroline Macomber, *Across the Campus* (New York: Scribner's).

A motherless girl is loved by two major characters who finally realize her extreme lack of tact, loyalty, and empathy. At Commencement, friendless and forlorn, she receives forgiveness. The gravity of the student's sins and the extent of the pardon bestowed upon her make this book an unusual college novel. Elevated conversations on religion and devotion exist side by side with petty controversies.

1899

Gallaher, Grace Margaret, *Vassar Stories* (Boston: Richard G. Badger).

The compilation conveys mixed impressions of student life among roommates, in sports as well as in magazine production. Some stories also depict a generalized line of development from the freshman to the senior student. Gallaher's stories are ironical at times. Still, even though the time spent in education has been described as a wearisome journey, the influence of the college spirit is eventually felt by all seniors.

1900

Daskam (Bacon), Josephine Dodge, *Sister's Vocation and Other Girls' Stories* (New York: Scribner's).

Out of the nine stories, 'A College Girl' and 'Her Father's Daughter' are related to college. The first one is about a splendid scholar who cannot finish her education because of financial problems. A wealthy, mediocre student then helps her. The second is about honourable behaviour. A student learns a lesson when she is almost taken off the basketball team because of her poor study results.

1900

Daskam (Bacon), Josephine Dodge, *Smith College Stories* (New York: Scribner's).

The stories are based on events in one class, different characters coming to the fore. They vary regarding background, attitudes, and future plans. Parents and relatives take up an exceptional amount of space – particularly so in the story about Commencement. The ceremonial day is seen through different eyes, thus offering the reader a variety of reactions.

* 1900

Field, Charles Kogg, and Will H. Irwin, *Stanford Stories: Tales of a Young University* (New York: Doubleday).

Some of the stories show how co-education creates tensions, as between a 'mousy' woman grind and a popular male athlete. In another tale, a good woman student teaches a 'woman-hater' how to study and get good results. The final story shows male graduate volunteers going into the Spanish War, whereas the young women go back to the 'household duties and narrow sympathies of a not over-interesting home'.

* 1900

Holbrook, Richard Thayer, *Boys and Men: A Story of Life at Yale* (New York: Scribner's).

The volume contains advertisements for college stories published by Scribner's such as *Smith College Stories*, *Across the Campus*, and *Princeton Stories*. In this novel the students work hard academically. The narrator says much about how friends should be chosen and what a football match looks like. Cheating is condemned; mathematics proves to be difficult for boys as well. The story focuses on two students – one pampered young man and the other on his own since his early teens – who become best friends, but also rivals for a gracious and womanly girl.

* 1901

Flandrau, Charles Macomb, *The Diary of a Freshman* (New York: Doubleday).

The story was serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post* and contains the rambling thoughts and experiences of a spoilt and not very bright young man. It provides ironic comments on professors' assignments, which prove to be not thoroughly thought out, and on students who are insufficiently prepared for their examinations.

* 1901

Minot, John Clair and Donald Francis Snow, eds, *Tales of Bowdoin: Some Gathered Fragments and Fancies of Undergraduate Life in the Past and Present* (Augusta, Maine: Press of Kennebec Journal).

The stories in this collection were written by Bowdoin men during the time span from '57 to '01. Among the early ones, some introduce college girls as being independent and friendly characters.

1901

Morris, Margaretta, and Louise Buffum Congdon, eds, *A Book of Bryn Mawr Stories* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs).

Also in this book, the stories were written by different people. Bryn Mawr had a reputation for being the toughest of women's colleges, opposing any change that threatened academic standards when compared to those of men's colleges. The stories present lively debates regarding women's higher education from several points of view, such as: What characterizes an intellectual woman – and What sort of knowledge is worth striving for?

1901

Cook, Grace Louise, *Wellesley Stories* (Boston: Richard G. Badger).

The earlier *College Girls* (1895) was written by a Wellesley graduate. This collection is set in the same environment, but the stories introduce new and critical features. 'Submerged' focuses on an ex-factory girl, who is laughed at by the other students. 'Clorinda' deals with an attractive and sociable upper-class senior, who is not represented as a likeable personality.

* 1901

Kauffman, Reginald Wright, *Jarvis of Harvard* (Boston: Page).

* 1901-02

Oviatt, Edwin, 'Introducing Thacher', *McClure's Magazine* 18, 515-25.

Because freshmen broke an unwritten rule at college, a wrestling match ensues. The freshman hero defeats the bully, but heroically admits that his opponent's arm is broken and does not wish to take advantage of the fact. His fellow students complain, whereas the rest of the college compliments him on his noble stance.

* 1901-11

Standish, Burt L., [pseud. for Gilbert Patten], *The Frank Merriwell Books* (Philadelphia: David McKay). Boys' Series.

Gilbert Patten wrote 28 stories about the protagonist's adventures, at least two of which were set in a college environment. Frank Merriwell was prepared at a military academy. At college, he will not drink and he neither smokes nor swears, traits which surprise some students. But as he succeeds in baseball, he is a hero. One adventure concerns stealing and preparing a turkey.

1902

Daskam (Bacon), Josephine Dodge, 'A Reversion to Type', *Scribner's Magazine*, 31 April, 452–60.

The short story contains arguments against a future in teaching, even at college. The main character is a German assistant in higher education. She once refused an offer of marriage, longing for a busy and individual life. After some years, she regrets her choice.

1902

Darling, Mary Greenleaf, *A Girl of This Century: A Continuation of 'We Four Girls'* (Boston: Lee & Shepard).

The earlier book was subtitled *A Summer Story for Girls* (1899). In the second, the protagonist is in her final year at Radcliffe. The message of the story is that a girl is expected to learn humility at college and that her aim in life should be to care for other people: one student helps her widowed mother instead of fulfilling her dream of studying medicine; another is advised to give up her ambition for her mother's sake. It is said to be impossible to combine marriage and a career.

1903

Reed, Helen Leah, *Brenda's Cousin at Radcliffe* (Boston: Little, Brown). Girls' Series.

Though not mentioned in *Girls Series Books*, the volume is one of a series about Brenda and her friends: *Brenda, Her School and Her Club*, 1900; *Brenda's Summer at Rockley: A Story for Girls*, 1901; *Brenda's Bargain: A Story for Girls*, 1903; *Brenda's Ward*, 1906. At Radcliffe, girls could reside with their parents and were not thrown together for a whole term. An important college-fiction factor is therefore missing here.

1903

Webster, Jean, *When Patty Went to College* (New York: Century, Grosset & Dunlap).

The separate stories are about the larks and pranks of an independent, witty, and essentially kind-hearted senior student.

1903–11

Douglas, Amanda Minnie, *The Helen Grant Books* (Boston: Lee & Shepard). Girls' Series

The nine titles follow the protagonist both before and after college. Books about her higher education were published 1906–07, followed by four volumes about her life as a graduate. They contain an ongoing discussion regarding college and marriage.

1904

Daskam (Bacon), Josephine Dodge, *Her Fiancé: Four Stories of College Life* (New York: Scribner's).

This book was reprinted in 1970 by Books for Libraries Press. The four stories have different perspectives – freshman studies, senior social life, and alumna reminiscences. One of them delineates a possible forerunner of Jervis Pendleton.

*** 1904**

Emerson, Gifford Taylor, *A Daughter of Dale* (New York: Century).

The writer was a Yale man, instructor of rhetoric and a Ph.D. The protagonist is a young man who falls in love with a respected and learned professor's granddaughter, who is steeped in the academic atmosphere. The story deals with his difficulty in deciding whether to become a scholar or go back to work on his estates, but also with how the woman learns to revise her scholarly ideals.

*** 1904–13**

Dudley, Albertus T., *The Phillips Exeter Books* (Boston: Lee, & Shepard). Boys' Series

Nine different stories of college sports, whose contents are indicated by titles such as *The Yale Cup*.

1904–17

Warde, Margaret [pseud. for Edith Kellogg Dunton], *The Betty Wales Books* (Philadelphia: Penn). Girls' Series

Margaret Warde wrote ten books about her heroine. In the first Betty Wales is a college freshman and in the last she is a businesswoman. The protagonist remains kind and friendly to the end. Her academic education is repeatedly referred to.

1904

Blanchard, Amy E., *Janet's College Career* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs).

The story opens with the main character preoccupied with thoughts about furnishing her college room, her mother doing all the work for her. The story is mostly about frolics and adventures, saying very little about academic work and character development. A poor young student is adopted by Janet and her friends, and her miraculous story makes up the latter half of the book. The girls are often outside college and also associate rather freely with men.

1905–10

Ray, Anna Chapin, *The Sidney Books* (Boston: Little, Brown). Girls' Series

Six volumes were published. Two of them are set in college: *Sidney at College* (1908) and *Sidney: Her Senior Year* (1910). The last book was dedicated to the President of Smith College. Neither of the two contains much of interest for the present thesis. The main character moves 'out of her merry college girlhood ... to the still greater happiness of the womanhood awaiting her'.

1906

Schwartz, Julia Augusta, *Elinor's College Career* (Boston: Little, Brown).

Schwartz wrote four books depicting college life. This title concentrates on four characters who happen to be thrown together. Each of them might be seen as representing an isolated trait of a typical college girl. Actually one of them, Elinor, wishes they were sisters; her demanding mother would then be happy. Together the four girls satisfy the contradictory claims on a college-educated woman that existed at the time.

1906–13

Blanchard, Amy E., *The Corner Books* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs). Girls' Series

The Four Corners at College (1911) is included in a series of eight titles.

1907

Schwartz, Julia Augusta, *Beatrice Leigh at College: A Story for Girls* (Philadelphia: Penn).

This volume is more like a collection of short stories than a coherent story. Still, there are four students, different in kind, who befriend one another in various ways. Little is said about their academic work. Instead the focus is on how character is moulded by friends, elder students, and lecturers.

* 1907

Minot, John Clair and Donald Francis Snow, eds, *Under the Bowdoin Pines: A Second Collection of Short Stories of Life at Bowdoin College Written by Bowdoin Men* (Augusta, Maine: Press of Kennebec Journal).

1907-08

Adams, H. B., 'Letters of a Wellesley Girl', *The New England Magazine*, vol 37: 32-36: 161-66, 360-65, 433-36: vol. 38: 82-87.

A student writes letters to her father about her college where she is having 'a mighty good time'. Adams also included an incredible frog-to-prince love story.

* 1907-11

Hare, Thomas Truxton, *The College Athletic Books* (Philadelphia: Penn). Boys' Series

The series includes five volumes: the titles indicate the stages of the protagonist's college career in sports, starting with *Making the Freshman Team* and ending with *A Graduate Coach*.

* 1908

Paine, Ralph D., *The Stroke Oar* (New York: Outing)

The setting is Yale; the story focuses on the university boating crew and on romance. Paine is introduced in this volume as being the author of *College Years*, *The Head Coach*, 'etc.'. The stories may be characterized as series books.

* 1908-

Hamilton, James Shelley, *The Butt Chandler Books* (New York: Appleton). Boys' Series

Four stories of college life and sports: *Butt Chandler*, *Freshman* (1908), *The New Sophomore* (1909), *Junior Days*, *Senior Sports*.

* 1908

Williams, Jesse Lynch, *The Girl and the Game and Other College Stories* (New York: Scribner's).

In these stories some characters from *Princeton Stories* reappear, and so does the protagonist from *The Adventures of a Freshman*. Williams depicts hazing, athletics, and freshmen who have flawed ideals or must learn to behave according to their freshman status. Impeccable young women characters make rogues improve their behaviour. The volume contains advertisements for other men's college stories.

1908–10

Ellis (Barrett), Katherine Ruth, *The Wide Awake Girls Books* (Boston: Little, Brown). Girls' Series

There are three volumes: the last one is about college, *The Wide Awake Girls at College*.

* 1909

Camp, Walter, *Jack Hall at Yale: A Football Story* (New York: Appleton).

This is another story about sports in which the setting happens to be college. Studies are mostly an obstacle to training. The volume contains advertisements for fiction about sports aimed at boys; it thus seems intended for juvenile readers.

1909

Hurd, Marian Kent and Jean Bingham Wilson, 'When She Came Home from College', *The Ladies' Home Journal*, May: 11, 12, 78, and 79; June, 13, 14, and 48; July 16, 42, and 43.

The Ladies' Home Journal was a magazine that had long evinced mistrust towards any career for a woman outside her home and family. Articles and pictures published in it show college education for women focused on clothes, leisure activities – especially frolics of any kind – and on how to earn money for the costs of education. The fictional text, which is quite amusing and also ironic, tells the story of how a graduate manages to take on responsibility when her mother falls ill. There is no love story.

1910

Catrevas, Christina, *That Freshman* (New York: Appleton).

Catrevas graduated from Mount Holyoke in 1903. In her introduction she explains that her story is about freshmen, the transition period between 'preparatory school and college when they are just awaking to the seriousness of work.' College is said to be a grand old place where a student must work like a 'galley slave'. Votes for women are discussed.

1910

Hatch, Mary R. P., 'Nan's Career', *The New England Magazine* 42, 440–47, 561–63.

Both the man and the woman in this two-part man-meets-woman story are college-educated. He is happy with her 'air of comradeship' and impressed with her plans for an academic career. In the end, however, she is content to marry him and abandon her own projects.

1910

Brown, Katherine Holland, *Philippa at Halcyon* (New York: Scribner's).

Philippa has small economic means, but manages to struggle through the co-education offered her at her chosen university. The major part of the novel focuses on her devotion to the university and the female students. The main story evolves around Halcyon, which is a tiny home for women scholars. At the end she is offered the post of superintendent of this House, with living expenses and a small salary which will help her through her last year.

1910

Jones, Mabel Cronise, *Dolly's College Experiences* (Boston: C. M. Clark).

*** 1910**

Rand, George Hart, *Sherman Hale, the Harvard Half-back* (New York: Fenno).

*** 1910**

Standish, Burt L. [pseud. for Gilbert Patten], *Bill Bruce of Harvard* (New York: Dodd, Mead).

1911

Hunt, Elizabeth Hollister, *When Margaret was a Freshman* (New York: Moffat, Yard).

Margaret is sent away to college by her devoted brother and father. In case 'it should ever be necessary to for her to help herself', she opts for the languages which are considered to be useful in teaching. Sociology is recommended to her as a broadening subject, and in the next (and last) volume, *When Margaret Was a Sophomore* (1912), she applies her new knowledge in a West End settlement.

*** 1911**

Odell, Frank, The Larry Burke Books (Boston: Lee & Shepard). Boys' Series
Two volumes describe the experiences of a protagonist at college.

*** 1911-14**

Colton, Matthew, The Frank Armstrong Books (New York: Hurst).
Boys' Series

Six volumes about a male protagonist contain stories of school life and athletics; the final one is *Frank Armstrong at College*.

1912

Webster, Jean, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (New York: Century).

An orphan proves her own strength and the beneficial influence of college by developing into an independent character.

* **1912**

Johnson, Owen, *Stover at Yale* (New York: Stokes).

During his four college years, Dink Stover develops into a character who relies more on himself than on other people. Experiences and discussions related to football and societies as well as to the content and organization of higher education are important aspects of this process. Three different types of young women are introduced: a waitress is sent to a convent school, paid for by Dink's fellow student, who wants his future wife to be culturally educated; Dink heroically rescues the life of a street-girl no student wants to be seen together with; and then Dink falls in love with, and is morally chastened by, virtuous Margaret, the sister of a fellow student and daughter of an academic.

1912–21

Speed (Sampson), Nell, *The Molly Brown Books* (New York: Hurst).
Girls' Series

Speed wrote eight books about her protagonist: the first four are set in college. When Molly has graduated, she is still considered a child by her mother and husband-to-be. Domestic Science is introduced and considered a fascinating subject, but also the butt of practical jokes. When marrying, college girls are said to enter *real* 'education': the 'school of Life'.

1912–15

Clancy (Breitenbach), Louise, *The Hadley Hall Books* (Boston: Page).
Girls' Series

The setting is a school preparing pupils for college. In the first novel, when protagonist Alma is a 'freshman', the new principal announces that the methods and scholarly standards at Hadley Hall have been approved by Smith College. Furthermore, a sensitive senior is awarded a scholarship at Vassar. In spite of this information, the series mostly adheres to 'womanly-woman' values. The volumes contain advertisements for 'The Page Company's Books for Young People'.

1912–15

Scott, Gertrude Fisher, The Jean Cabot Books (Boston: Lee, & Shepard) Girls' Series

Two out of four volumes are set in college, where two roommates are each other's opposites. Her father and five brothers pamper Jean, while Elizabeth must care for her younger brother. She wants her college education at all costs, while Jean only intends to stay for one year. They learn from each other, and Jean decides to come back and finish her education. Mostly, a reader learns about spare-time activities and societies. As in several college stories, a student magazine is influential. The daily writing of English themes is depicted as a burden for some students.

1913–20

Emerson, Alice B. (the Stratemeyer Syndicate), The Ruth Fielding Books (New York: Cupples and Leon) Girls' Series

The popular series about Ruth Fielding includes one volume set in college: *Ruth Fielding at College; or the Missing Examination Papers* (1917). A curious detail in the story is the way a female – 'not wholly attractive' – (mathematics) teacher admonishes a student to lose weight, calling her 'the fattest girl' and a 'heavy-weight'.

1913

Warde, Margaret [pseud. for Edith Kellogg Dunton], 'The Freshman Freak', *St. Nicholas' Magazine*, 1012–18.

A girl student acquires a new, rich roommate, who pretends to be poor. The story focuses on snobs at college.

*** 1913–16**

Quirk, Leslie W., The Wellworth College Books (Boston: Little, Brown). Boys' Series

Four stories of college life and sports. Titles like *The Freshman Eight*, *The Third Strike* indicate a focus on sports.

1914

Gilchrist, Beth B., 'The Mixing Bowl', *Youth's Companion* 88, February–April 1914, 93–94, 105–06, 117–18, 133–34, 148–49, 157–58, 171–72, 188–89, 204–05, 216–17.

The title of this freshman story is misleading, although at the outset a main character does regard college as a place where being rich or poor is of no importance. Most of all, this is a cautionary tale. A girl has to study dili-

gently and regularly at college, and her best teachers are shown to be her caring and honest fellow students.

1914–15

Flower (Chase), Jessie Graham, *The College Girls Books* (Philadelphia: Altemus). Girls' Series

A number of books follow Grace Harlowe from high school through adulthood. In this particular series, she spends four years at Overton College where she is preoccupied with undermining snobbish cliques. Each consecutive volume opens with a summary of the earlier adventures and ends by pointing to what is to be expected in the next volume; all of the books also contain advertisements for books aimed at 'real' boys and girls.

* 1914–25

Standish, Burt L. [pseud. for Gilbert Patten] *The College Life Books*. Boys' Series

Six volumes tell about sports and fun at Yale.

1915

Montgomery, L. M., *Anne of the Island* (Boston: Page).

Anne studies at Redmond, a co-educational university, as the first girl student from Prince Edward Island.

* 1915–16

Elderdice, Raymond J., *The T. Haviland Hicks Books* (New York: Appleton). Boys' Series

The most important part of a college education is shown to be sports: the protagonist's father is anxious that his son should win some athletic victory, which is hard for the young man. Doing something for the college and upholding its traditions are major goals for the students; in each volume the protagonist 'saves' another student in this respect.

1915–16

Sharp, Annabel, *The Peggy Parsons Books* (Boston: Donohue). Girls' Series

The protagonist goes from school to college.

1917–21

Colver, Alice Ross, *The Babs Books* (Philadelphia: Penn). Girls' Series

Four volumes follow the protagonist from before college, seeing her at home in the last one. She is at college in the third story from 1920.

1917–22

Bancroft, Edith, *The Jane Allen Books* (New York: Cupples & Leon).

Girls' Series

Five volumes about a sportive protagonist.

1918

Schwartz, Julia Augusta, *When Jean and I Were Sophomores* (Philadelphia: Penn)

A short-story collection for young girls.

*** 1921–25**

Stone, David, *The Yank Brown Books* (New York: Barse & Hopkins). Boys' Series

Six volumes contain stories of College Sports.

1922

Richards, Lela Horn, *Caroline at College* (Boston: Little, Brown).

Co-education at Berkeley. When translated into Swedish (in 1924), the book was included in a library for children. Caroline's mother had been educated in literature and household management, whereas Caroline chooses anthropology and entomology as her main subjects.

1922–25

Lester, Pauline, *The Marjorie Dean College Books* (New York: A. L. Burt).

Girls' Series

Five out of fourteen stories about the protagonist depict her in higher education, although very little space is devoted to academic work. The volumes are said to be intended for 'Girls 12 to 18 years of age'; the Girl Chum's Series and the Girl Comrade's Series are advertised in them.

1925–29

Specking, Inez, *The Martha Jane Books* (New York: Benzinger). Girls' Series

Three volumes follow the protagonist from a western boarding school into the second college year.

1934–55

Blank, Clair, *The Beverly Gray College Mystery Books* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap). Girls' Series

Beverly Gray appeared in no less than twenty-six volumes. The first four books, which present her at college, contain both mysteries to be solved and insights into college life and studies.

* 1935

Flandrau, Charles Macomb, *Sophomores Abroad* (New York: Appleton, Century).

A large part of the book contains the writer's 'Apologia Pro Scriptis Meis'. In it Flandrau states his points of view regarding both his own earlier college stories and those written by other authors, whose stories he dismisses as untrue, labelling them conventional and standardized. The new story, as the title indicates, is not set in college.

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TWENTY YEARS after Vassar College welcomed the first American female undergraduates in 1865, the experiences of women college students began to be fictionalized in so-called college stories. This study shows how higher education is presented in these novels and short stories, published during the dynamic period – from the 1880s to the 1910s – in which women's colleges gradually gained acceptance.

Two dimensions are of fundamental importance. The first has to do with contemporaneous opinions as to what constituted appropriate behaviour and work for young women. These are issues very much to the fore in the college stories, in which college is often seen to succeed where the home has somehow failed.

The other dimension concerns individual character development and is manifest in matters pertaining to academic education, campus life activities, and the ways in which college girls are seen to mature by means of their instruction, assignments, occupations, and interaction with their peers.

While men's college stories also come in for some attention, Lord Alfred Tennyson's narrative poem *The Princess* is used as a reference throughout this study. It contains ideas for and against higher education for women articulated at a time when no such academic institution for women existed in the Anglo-Saxon world. In *Daddy-Long-Legs* and its sequel *Dear Enemy*, Jean Webster created a balance between the contradictory ideas that Tennyson had addressed – a balance that is not seen in any of the earlier stories.

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