

Introduction

In 1870, the University of Michigan reached a major turning point. In January of that year, the university—one of the oldest, largest, and most prestigious public universities in the United States—admitted its first woman student. The Board of Regents, which governed the university's affairs, had been debating this step for fifteen years but had refused to take it on the grounds that the admission of women would jeopardize Michigan's reputation as offering top-notch professional training to men. Pressured by the state's teachers, taxpaying parents of daughters, and activists in the woman's rights movement, the regents at last voted to accept women. Madelon Stockwell immediately presented herself for admission to the university's literature department. Stockwell earned her degree in less than two years and was chosen a commencement speaker, a singular honor for any senior, male or female. In fall 1870, the university admitted thirty-four women. By the following year, sixty-four women were studying at Michigan: three in law, thirty-three in medicine, and twenty-eight in the Department of Science, Literature, and the Arts. Thus began what some observers called Michigan's "dangerous experiment" with coeducation.¹

What was it like to be a member of this tiny group of brave "coeds," who made up just 3 percent of the university's twelve hundred students? Two historians, Dorothy Gies McGuigan and Ruth Bordin, have published detailed studies of the experience. For documentation, they used a variety of primary sources, including records of the regents' debates, the testimony of eyewitness participants, and accounts and comments in contemporary newspapers.² They also used *An American Girl, and Her Four Years in a Boys' College*, the novel presented here for the first time since its original publication in 1878.

The novel's author, Olive San Louie Anderson, was a member of the small class of women students who entered the university in 1871. She graduated in 1875, wrote the book two years later, and published it under

the pen name SOLA, an anagram of her initials. Her novel is, on the surface at least, a roman à clef, a literary genre in which the author disguises actual people and events by giving the main characters fictional names and altering the course of events for dramatic purposes. But it was never meant to be a realistic portrayal of women's experiences at Michigan. Instead its goal was to tell the story of the emergence into maturity of a highly independent, modern "American girl."

Anderson's American girl is an early rendering in fiction of the "new woman" of the late nineteenth century. Such a woman challenged many of the moral, religious, and cultural values of her day. In Anderson's time, people would have called this woman unconventional or perhaps strong-minded. Today we would call her a feminist, that is, an individual who refuses to be subordinated to men, who desires as many opportunities for education and achievement as men enjoy, and who seeks a life of meaning and purpose beyond domesticity. Anderson's American girl is a feminist who throughout her experiences of coeducation retains a strong feminine core. As such, she is a character whom modern readers will find both engaging and provocative.

The Narrative Structure of *An American Girl*

Anderson built her novel around the character of Wilhelmine Elliot, the rebellious daughter of a freethinking surgeon who had died during the Civil War. Her family and friends call her Will. As this is a name that could also belong to a boy, it captures not only the heroine's "tomboyish" behavior but also her obstinate and sometimes impulsive temperament. As the novel opens, Will is telling her mother that she cannot accept a Christian catechism that emphasizes damnation. She has already declined to attend a "fashionable boarding school" that merely "finishes off" girls instead of taking their academic training seriously. Envious of her male classmates' talk of college, she is thrilled when she hears that "one of the finest universities in the country has opened its doors to women." Her mother, secretly proud of her unconventional daughter, allows her to go.

Will sets off for the "University of Ortonville," a stand-in for Michigan. The school's president welcomes her warmly but the town less so. Like all students in that day, Will must arrange for her own lodgings. Several landladies refuse to board women. Eventually a kind steward helps her find

accommodations, and the next morning she presents herself for her entrance examinations.³ These are in mathematics, history, geography, Latin, and Greek, all subjects in a “classical” curriculum usually taken only by those destined for professional careers—in other words, men. Will does well in all the subjects but needs tutoring in Greek.

Daily “persecutions” follow. She is almost injured by sophomore men hazing the freshmen. Her Greek tutor presses attentions on her that are both unwanted and worrisome. Won’t people think the girls have come to the university only “to flirt”? She worries about going alone to hear a famous former abolitionist speak. Professors praise her academic work and that of the other women but predict that the strain will soon break down their health. Will’s beloved younger sister, long an invalid, dies.

Matters improve in Will’s second year. The town’s landladies now welcome female boarders because they are neater and quieter than the boys. Will, gaining in self-confidence, organizes a successful debate on woman suffrage. To stay healthy she takes up rigorous physical exercise, including chopping wood, and soon wins a reputation for being an “Amazon.” She decides to take her degree in literature and then study medicine. A romance develops with Guilford Randolph, who at first disdains the “tomboyish” Will but is soon “smashed.” By the end of Will’s third year, the two are steady companions, but his negative reaction to her plan to become a physician is not a good sign.

During her senior year, when she accidentally overhears Randolph disparaging her to another girl, she breaks off the affair. In the end, she finds her career goals thwarted. An uncle, who had invested her legacy, has lost it. Will must find a teaching post to earn her living. One school rejects her for not being a member of a church, but another in Wisconsin promises her a post teaching Greek and Latin. At commencement, Will is the only woman student chosen to speak. Her oration, “Women in the Professions,” calls for an “open career for talent.” As Will leaves for her teaching post, her remorseful former beau begs her to write him. She says she will, as in her heart she still loves him. And thus she keeps open the possibility, but not the promise, of personal fulfillment.

An American Girl as Autobiography

Many of the details of Will Elliot’s life resemble those of the novel’s author, Olive San Louie Anderson.⁴ Born in Lexington, Ohio, in 1852,

Anderson was (like Will) the daughter of a doctor, Dr. Hugh P. Anderson, who died when she was seventeen. One year of her schooling was spent with her mother (Alice Cook) and sister in the house of her maternal grandfather. The sister was ill (in Olive's case she was older; in Will's, younger). As this illness preoccupied the family, young Olive was left to romp and play sports with her brothers. The family spent some time on the Iowa frontier but later returned to Ohio, where Olive graduated from the Mansfield, Ohio, high school in 1869. After teaching in public schools for a while, she began to prepare for college. Her fictional character, Will, entered the "classical course" at Ortonville in 1870, but Olive did not enter Michigan until 1871.

Like Will, Anderson had a masculine nickname. According to Sarah Dix Hamlin, who was one class ahead of Anderson at Michigan and would later write a lengthy obituary of her friend, Anderson's friends called her Joe. "A certain air of frankness," Hamlin wrote, "a way of saying original and unexpected things, a certain style in Miss Anderson at this time, reminded her friends so much of the 'Jo' in Miss Alcott's 'Little Women,' that almost unconsciously the name of 'Jo' was given to her, and she became known every-where in Ann Arbor as 'Joe Anderson.'"⁵

Also like Will, Anderson was the only woman honored with an "appointment," as it was then called, to speak at commencement. The title of her talk was "The Next Century." According to one report, the theme of her speech was the nation's young age. She predicted that in the next century Americans would see improved machinery and faster locomotion. She emphasized, however, that "neither the twentieth century nor the fortieth would see the world redeemed unless women were granted the rights and privileges which belong to them."⁶

According to Hamlin, Anderson was known throughout the university for "her bright, original manners, her clear reasoning powers, her witty and concise way of expressing herself." These qualities "rendered her a favorite both within and without the class room." Anderson "constituted herself a champion of woman," using "her bright wit and . . . sarcasm" (as opposed to "ranting") to make her "onslaught upon old customs and opinions." "Her orations and essays," Hamlin added, "were seldom without some allusions to the 'woman question,' expressed with a great deal of original force, and many were the students who flocked to the lecture-room when it was known that she was to speak."⁷



Sarah Dix Hamlin, Class of 1874. Hamlin was a year ahead of Anderson at the University of Michigan. Like Anderson, she settled in San Francisco, where she founded the Hamlin School for Girls. In 1886, she wrote Anderson's obituary, the basis for most of what is known about her friend's short life. (F99-535: Class of 1874, Classes by Year, Individual, University of Michigan Photographs Vertical File, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.)

Anderson, again like Will, planned a career in medicine. She had every intention of returning to the University of Michigan to fulfill this ambition but instead, like her protagonist, became a teacher. She did not move to Wisconsin, however, but to California. After staying in San Francisco for a while she took up a post teaching Greek and Latin at a college in Santa Barbara. While there, she wrote short sketches, which were published in some eastern newspapers, about the "quaint" Spanish life of the place. She also wrote *An American Girl*. When the college at

which she was teaching closed, she taught in various private schools until she became a partner in a private school in San Rafael in May 1882. She later served as this school's principal.

Hamlin describes Anderson as an inspiring teacher, writing that she believed that "life was holy, that it was possible to make it divine through dedication and devotion to high aims, though the labor might be humble." "What matters [is] the work and who can measure the results," Hamlin reports Anderson as saying. "They are all the same, if one's own conscience is clear. Is it not better than all else to have one's own approval than the applause of the world if you stand convicted before your true self?" An advocate of physical training, Anderson carried herself with a step that "had the spring of the deer." "Certainly few have seen that splendid form," Hamlin wrote, "that graceful carriage, that high bearing, without feeling that here was a 'perfect woman, nobly planned.'" Anderson (again like Will) was "an accomplished and fearless horse-woman, able to bring a horse into perfect obedience to her will; expert with the rifle, able to bring down a bird on the wing; a good swimmer and skilled in all athletic and out-of-door games." She loved nature and the West Coast, once writing, "How I love this coast, the part made by nature. The ocean and the islands form a picture which can never cease to be a source of pleasure."

In her religious views, Anderson "despised all artificiality and superficiality, believing that the voice of conscience speaking to the heart and soul and mind was the voice of God." She "despised all cant and avoided all expressions savoring of sentimentality." Hamlin reported that she once exclaimed passionately, "I would be that which it is right for one to be, but I must think for myself, I cannot be bound by religion's shackles." She never found a theological creed that satisfied her more than an "intense practical religion" that entailed "devotion to duty and consecration to high aims."

In June 1886, Anderson spent a month with an "Artistic League" on San Francisco Bay, partly on a boat and partly on shore. She was collecting materials for a "California" book and preparing for foreign travel and study. While planning a series of panel sketches for which she was to have written the literary material, her party went up the Sacramento River on a yacht called the *Ariel*. On June 5, the excursion's last morning, Anderson left the yacht with five members of the party to take a swim in the river. Seized with cramps, she sank before anyone could help her.⁸

Anderson's body was sent to Mansfield, Ohio, where it was buried by her father's side. A friend, Elizabeth C. Curtis, collected some of her last writings, which Anderson probably never would have published, and printed five hundred copies in remembrance of her in a book entitled *Stories and Sketches. An American Girl* was thus "Joe" Anderson's first and last novel.

The Historical Context

Educational Opportunities for Women in the Nineteenth Century

For young American women like Olive Anderson, the opportunity to attend a major state university was a welcome development. Few of their mothers and even fewer of their grandmothers had enjoyed such a privilege. In the early nineteenth century, hardly any colleges accepted women students at all. Most educators then saw little point in sending women to college, since the professions requiring a college education, such as law, medicine, and the ministry, were open only to men; grade school teaching, the one profession women could enter, required only a high school education. Moreover, most parents assumed their daughters would marry, bear children, or otherwise devote themselves to domestic pursuits. Contemporary prejudices against intellectual women led many parents to believe that no man would want to marry a woman more interested in study than in taking care of a household.

Not all Americans agreed with such attitudes. Advocates of higher education for women argued that it would make women better wives and mothers. Educated mothers could properly train their sons for citizenship and their daughters to fulfill the same role in relation to their own children. They also argued that wives knowledgeable about the world would run more efficient, harmonious households, thereby relieving their husbands of domestic cares and freeing them to pursue the family's living in the competitive marketplace.⁹ Thus, the whole society would benefit from educated mothers.

But what of single women or those who married "badly," perhaps finding themselves wed to a gambler, an alcoholic, or an abuser? And what of women who lost their husbands to illness, accident, death, or desertion? Independently wealthy women might fare well enough, but for those who

needed to make a living an advanced education would certainly increase their chances of avoiding destitution.

To these practical reasons for women's education, others added more feminist arguments. Many nineteenth-century American women yearned for more fulfilling intellectual lives. They claimed a "right" to an education equal to that of men. Most of these egalitarians did not believe that educated women would or could compete on equal terms with men in the public sphere. Pointing to the physical and moral differences between women and men, they predicted that the two sexes would always play different social roles. Some egalitarians, however, were active in the rising woman's movement, which had begun officially with the convening of the first "Woman's Rights Convention" at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. These women were eager to enter the professions that continued to exclude them. By midcentury, they were mounting energetic campaigns to win admission for women to college and university training.¹⁰

Women who wanted to teach also put pressure on educational establishments to admit them to college. In the early nineteenth century, the American population grew dramatically, increasing the need for schoolteachers. As the nation's growing communities could rarely pay enough to hire male teachers, they turned with increasing frequency to women, whom (they rightly assumed) they could pay one-half to one-third of what they paid men. As the teaching profession became feminized, women's opportunities for higher education expanded through the founding of private seminaries (so-called in order to distinguish them from the "academies" meant for boys) and state-funded "normal," or teacher-training, schools. Although these were open to both sexes, women's enrollment exceeded men's.¹¹

The most prestigious of the early women's seminaries included Emma Willard's, which was established in Middlebury, Vermont, in 1814 and moved to Troy, New York, in 1821, where it is still a boarding school for girls; Catharine Beecher's, founded in 1824 in Hartford, Connecticut; and Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke, founded in 1837 in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and now a college for women. Schools such as these generally offered a three-year course roughly equivalent to today's secondary education. After 1850, growing numbers of these schools upgraded their curricula to emulate those of men's four-year colleges. Finally, after the Civil War, several elite colleges for women opened in the

East. These included Vassar (1865), which claimed to offer a curriculum equal to that of elite male colleges in the arts and sciences (it actually provided laboratories); Wellesley (1875); Smith (1875); and Bryn Mawr (1885).¹²

Early Coeducational Opportunities

Oberlin, a private institution in Ohio, was the nation's first coeducational college. Initially founded to train ministers, after 1833 it also accepted women students. Convinced that women were more spiritual than men, Oberlin's founders hoped that women's presence would raise the campus's moral tone, help the future ministers learn to work with female congregants, and be a source of the ministers' future wives.¹³ Thus, at Oberlin coeducation at first aimed less to meet the needs and ambitions of women than those of men.

Instead of taking the courses in Hebrew, Latin, or Greek expected of the college's future ministers, Oberlin's early women students were enrolled in a "ladies' course," which was heavy on religion, French, poetry, and modern literature. To its credit, Oberlin did not offer the "ornamental" courses, such as embroidery or wax working, popular in the eastern finishing schools that Anderson's protagonist rejects. In 1841, the college ended women's obligation to take the ladies' course, but for some time it still denied women the right to deliver orations or conduct debates before mixed-sex audiences.¹⁴

Antioch College, founded in 1853 in Yellow Springs, Ohio, as a nonsectarian college, was coeducational from the start. The famed educator Horace Mann, then the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, was attracted to Antioch's presidency not only by the school's nonsectarianism but also by the idea of giving women the "equal advantages of education." Mann held a narrow view of the purpose of higher education for women, however. Concerned with overall community improvement, he saw higher education as preparing women primarily to become teachers, not professionals who might compete with men in their spheres. He once told a rebellious woman student that he would not remain president of a coeducational college if as a result of higher education women might seek to enter the professions.

Worried about the potential for moral transgression at Antioch, Mann

drew up an elaborate set of rules governing the relations between the sexes. He allowed them to take classes together but separated them everywhere else, even on college walks. Women could not live off campus but only in Ladies' Hall, a residence supervised strictly by a matron. When advising the University of Michigan on whether to admit women, Mann warned that they would need to prevent all clandestine correspondence and meetings between the sexes. In his view, if Michigan's administrators could not do this they should abandon coeducation altogether.¹⁵

In the 1850s, small midwestern church denominations, such as the Methodists, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Friends (Quakers), and Universalists, also established coeducational colleges. The chief reason was financial: their rural congregations were generally too poor to afford separate institutions for their sons and daughters. Even if church members could have paid the tuition of an elite eastern institution, they rarely were willing to send their daughters so far from home. Moreover, they wanted to provide their offspring with a practical, scientific education. Neither the classical training offered in the East nor the finishing school atmosphere of many female seminaries was adequate. And, finally, coeducation appealed to small denominations because it held out the hope that offspring would marry within their faiths.¹⁶

The colleges established for African Americans after the Civil War were also coeducational. Like the small denominational colleges, these institutions could not afford to maintain separate schools for men and women. As the African American educator Anna Julia Cooper wrote in 1893, "These schools were almost without exception co-educational. Funds were too limited to be divided on sex lines, even had it been ideally desirable; but our girls as well as our boys flocked in and battled for an education."¹⁷

Some denominational colleges believed in coeducation on principle. In 1873, Edward Hicks Magill, president of the Quaker college Swarthmore, extolled coeducation as liberating to women. In an "Address upon the Co-education of the Sexes," he quoted a father of one of his students, who said he was pleased that her associations with young men in "a competitive way" had strengthened her "rather yielding character," which had lacked self-esteem, and now she was "better able to understand, weigh and value them at their *real worth*, and not be dazed by her first contact with the other sex." Magill asserted that women do just as well if not better than men in scholarship and without detriment to their health.¹⁸

Coeducation Comes to the University of Michigan

In general, coeducation was more the rule in the Midwest and Far West, where it was fostered by the populist and evangelical denominations most active in the development of the multipurpose college. The land-grant institutions founded by the Morrill Act of 1862, which granted public lands to states in order to fund agricultural and mechanical education for all classes, accepted women from the start.¹⁹ By 1867, twenty-two American colleges and universities were admitting women as well as men. By 1870, eight state universities, including those of Iowa, Wisconsin, Kansas, Indiana, Minnesota, and Missouri, were coeducational. Cornell University, which opened in Ithaca, New York, in 1865, admitted its first woman in 1870 as well.²⁰

All of Michigan's elementary and high schools, as well as the university's preparatory branches, which readied students for university study, were coeducational. The state's land-grant institution in East Lansing and its Normal School in Ypsilanti were also coeducational. But the university in Ann Arbor held out. The institution's 1837 charter declared that it "shall be open to all *persons* who possess the requisite literary and moral qualifications."²¹ The regents granted that women were persons but argued that, since the purpose of university training was to prepare men for the professions, women should not be admitted. When in May 1855 the State Teachers' Association passed a resolution in favor of admitting women, the university's president responded only by proposing that the state establish a "Female Seminary" across the street.

In the spring of 1858, twelve Michigan "ladies" informed the university's Board of Regents that they planned to apply for admission the following fall. The regents appointed a committee to prepare a response. Over the summer, the committee wrote to leading educators (all of whom were male) to ask their views. All wrote back saying that they opposed coeducation.

President Woolsey of Yale commented, "Of what use degrees are to be to girls I don't see, unless they addict themselves to professional life, and I should expect the introduction of such a plan would be met with ridicule." President Walker of Harvard pointed to the "immense preponderance of enlightened public opinion against this experiment," one that should never be undertaken unless society proposed educating females for "public life." In making his argument against women's admission, Dr. Nott of

Union College also called attention to the “difference of sex and of destination.” Women, he said, were delicate of sentiment, dependent, and shrink from the public view, while men were decisive, self-reliant, independent, and willing “to meet opposition and encounter difficulties.” In short, the sexes were so different that he could not envision their studying together “without endangering alike their virtue and their happiness.” The Yale-educated evangelical minister Lyman Beecher was positively alarmist, expostulating, “This Amalgamation of sexes won’t do. If you live in a Powder House you blow up once in a while.”

These views, taken along with those of Antioch’s Horace Mann and Oberlin’s Charles Finney, both of whom warned that coeducation would require constant supervision, persuaded the regents once again to refuse the admission of women. Yes, women were persons, their report conceded, but they had a right to withhold admission from those “whose presence would detract from the character of the Institution, or prevent it from attaining to the proper rank of a University.” They were careful to disassociate the twelve “young ladies” from “the political or social movements known as ‘Women’s Rights,’ ‘Free Love,’ etc. etc.,” but the mere suggestion that the women *might* be linked to those movements was enough to quash the idea of admitting them.²²

Still the issue would not go away. In 1859, almost fifteen hundred Michigan citizens petitioned the regents to admit women. In response, the regents distributed two thousand copies of their report of the previous year. Suspended during the Civil War, the debate recommenced afterward. Advocates of women’s admission, many of them Michigan suffragists, pressed the regents to change their minds. They won over one, George Willard, an Episcopal rector and Latin professor at Kalamazoo College, and several of the university’s faculty. In 1866, one faculty member’s daughter, Alice Boise, audited Greek classes at the university, including her father’s. Her presence on campus, where (as she later wrote) “no woman’s foot was known,” may have helped accustom the university community to the idea of coeducation. Favorable comments, such as that women’s presence might make the students “less boorish in their manners and less profane in their conversation,” began to appear in the student press. In the spring of 1867, the state legislature passed a resolution in favor of admitting women to all of the university’s “rights and privileges.” Still university leaders said no. Calling the idea of coeducation “a radical

revolution,” President Erastus O. Haven insisted that the wiser course for the state would be to build a separate women’s college.²³

In the end, economics made that proposal unrealistic. The state’s legislators knew that Michigan taxpayers would never approve such a plan. Even so, the regents continued to oppose coeducation until, following another legislative resolution in favor of it and the appointment of two new members to the board, in January 1870 they finally agreed to admit Madelon Stockwell.

As Olive Anderson describes so vividly in her novel, the townspeople were unhappy with the first appearance of women students in the town of Ann Arbor. One student, Caroline Hubbard Kleinstueck, felt that the “antagonism of the townspeople” was harder to bear than that of the male students. Others reported that, despite women’s presence in classrooms, some faculty members persisted in addressing their students as “Gentlemen.” The *Michigan Argus*, a local weekly, made sneering remarks about the “academic” subjects women students might pursue, such as “a little piano and guitar . . . pencil-sketching . . . light gymnastics and calisthenics, with all the accomplishments of a modern belle.”

Members of the medical faculty were especially resistant to women applicants. Expressing views widely held in their day, they argued that, as “woman is during a large fraction of each month a quasi-invalid” and “childbearing must incapacitate her during a large part of the period of *utero* gestation,” medical coeducation was “an experiment of doubtful utility, and one not calculated to increase the dignity of man, nor the modesty of woman.” The medical faculty acquiesced only after receiving approval to instruct male and female students separately and be given an extra five hundred dollars in salary for this purpose. By 1871, the medical faculty dean reported that the “experiment” of coeducation had proceeded well and that Amanda Sanford, the faculty’s first woman student, was graduating with honors. Still, male students hooted when she crossed the stage to receive her diploma.²⁴

Michigan’s women students had a powerful defender in James Burrill Angell, who became university president in 1871 and remained in that office for thirty-two years. Often asked his opinion of coeducation, Angell took many opportunities to point to the “brilliant successes” of Michigan’s women students. To his mind, they had both the intellectual gifts and the physical stamina to do well in a university course of study. Moreover, he

denied that the women had experienced any “danger” to their virtue by coming to a “boys’ college.” “The relations of the sexes to each other here are those of well-bred men and women, and are not, in fact, in the least degree embarrassing to us,” he wrote in 1881.²⁵

Michigan did not hire women faculty for many years. After 1877, Louisa Reed Stowell held a minor appointment teaching microscopical botany, and after 1881 Dr. Lena C. Leland was an assistant demonstrator in anatomy in the Medical Department, but no woman held a full faculty appointment until Dr. Eliza Mosher (Michigan, Class of 1875) became dean of women in 1896. Mosher at first refused the deanship because the Medical Department had denied her a full professorship in gynecology. She later accepted the post of dean when President Angell appointed her a lecturer in hygiene in the Literary Department, a post that carried with it the rank and salary of a full professor. By the turn of the twentieth century, twelve women were teaching at Michigan, primarily in the sciences and all at low rank and salary. Alumnae and other women’s advocates raised money for endowed chairs to be held by women, but the regents never approved such a use for these funds. The university did not make its first “chaired” appointments of women until the 1950s.²⁶

After getting past the original discomfort of her minority status in “Ortonville” (Ann Arbor), Anderson’s protagonist, Will Elliot, enjoys life at her coeducational university. The townspeople grow accustomed to the sight of women “co-eds” and welcome them in their homes. Will’s increasing comfort in Ortonville seems to reflect the reality for women students who joined the university community in later years. At one point in the novel, Will contrasts the “free and easy life” she felt she could lead in a coeducational environment to the “strict boarding-school atmosphere” of single-sex schools such as Vassar. She develops strong and lasting platonic friendships with men such as Charlie Burton, who becomes engaged to her friend Nellie Holmes, and Tom Phelps, whose life she saves in a skating accident. In her letter to a friend at Vassar, she brags that “we have the most unbounded liberty” and she was “a pattern of decorum.”²⁷

Indeed, for this first generation of college women, campus life at Michigan was “free and easy.” As the historian Dorothy McGuigan notes, Michigan “had devised no special rules for women nor created any special authority to supervise their actions.”²⁸ This changed, however. By the 1890s, the university’s deans of women had established strict rules of

behavior, some of which lasted to the 1960s. The introduction of a system in loco parentis (in the place of parents) may have been due to the declining age of women students. The first generations of college women tended to be three to five years older than the men students, and thus they were perceived as being less in need of such supervision.²⁹

Opponents of Coeducation

Despite the high standing of supporters of coeducation such as President Angell, opponents continued to raise objections long into the decades surrounding the turn of the century. In the mid-1870s, these opponents took arguments from a highly popular book by Dr. Edward H. Clarke, a prominent Boston physician and former member of the Harvard Medical School faculty. Clarke's *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for Girls* (1873), was an expanded version of a speech he had delivered before the New England Woman's Club the previous year. In it, he charged that women did irreparable physiological harm to themselves when they undertook a higher educational curriculum designed for men. Hungry for reasons not to proceed any farther with coeducation, many readers seized on Clarke's book as a definitive answer to advocates of women's professional advancement. Its first printing sold out in a week.³⁰

Clarke asserted that women's "periodical movements" (i.e., menstruation), "which characterize and influence woman's structure for more than half her terrestrial life," consume a large part of her "vital forces," or energies, especially between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Young women who try to ignore this periodicity, instead focusing their energies on intellectual work, flout the immutable "laws of nature," drain sustenance from their reproductive systems, and inevitably fall ill, even to the point of sterility and lifelong invalidism. Clarke concluded, "Appropriate education of the two sexes, carried as far as possible, is a consummation most devoutly to be desired; identical education of the two sexes is a crime before God and humanity, that physiology protests against, and that experience weeps over." His solution? "Educate a man for manhood, a woman for womanhood, both for humanity. In this lies the hope of the race."³¹

Two sets of contemporary scientific ideas supported Clarke's polemic. The first concerned the differences between the sexes. Charles Darwin's recently published *Descent of Man* (1871) had presented a theory of sexual

divergence as an integral part of the evolutionary process. Darwin theorized that because motherhood forced females into periodic dependence on males, during the evolutionary process their brain development fell behind. Male brains became not only larger and heavier but more “evolved” than the female’s. Darwin granted that females developed strong intuitive powers, rapid perception, and quick reflexes but insisted that they rarely could compete with the more “advanced” ability of men to reason and do imaginative work.

The second set of ideas informing Clarke’s theories derived from thermodynamics. According to its law of the conservation of energy, energy spent in one part of a system had to draw energy from another. The British sociologist Herbert Spencer had argued that all physical systems, including the human body, were subject to this law. Clarke concluded from Spencer’s work that excessive brain work for women during the years of puberty drew energy away from their reproductive systems at a crucial time in their physiological development.³²

In making this argument, Clarke was not denying women a “right” to education. He was asking only that their education suit their biology. Nor was he saying that women’s pursuit of education was the sole cause of the physical weaknesses he observed in some of his young women patients. Some patients, he said, fell victim to “irrational cooking and indigestible diet.” “We live in the zone of perpetual pie and doughnut,” he complained. To make matters worse, women strap “artificial deformities” (corsets) to their spines. But Clarke’s chief argument was that educating girls in the same way as boys “arrested” the development of their reproductive systems, thereby destroying their maternal instincts and turning them into sexless “Amazons.”³³

Clarke’s “biological reductionism,” the belief that human beings are defined by their biology, infuriated women’s advocates. They immediately set out to refute him, first by contrasting his mere seven examples of highly educated women who had become invalids with dozens of counter-examples of physically fit and fertile college women. In 1885, the Association of Collegiate Alumnae published a scientific survey of its membership to show that female college graduates were not the invalids Clarke had predicted they would become. Others responded by taking his predictions of women’s invalidism seriously but then offsetting them by establishing mandatory physical education programs for women at both women’s and coeducational colleges.³⁴

Olive Anderson's *An American Girl* was also a response to Clarke. She opens the novel with Will's mother protesting her daughter's plan to attend a "boys' college" on the grounds that it will ruin her health. Will dismisses her mother's fears, taking up the topic again (chap. IV) when she hears that Clarke's book sold more than two hundred copies on its first day on the market in Ortonville. Will then engages in a lively discussion about Clarke with her women friends.

Will begins by asking what Clarke would "do with us after he has cajoled us into believing that we are born and predestined to be invalids. . . .? Send us home to embroider chair-covers and toilet-sets, I suppose." She continues with a paean to female strength.

Women have washed and baked, scrubbed, cried and prayed themselves into their graves for thousands of years, and no person has written a book advising them not to work too hard; but just as soon as women are beginning to have a show in education, up starts your erudite doctor with his learned nonsense, embellished with scarecrow stories, trying to prove that woman's complicated physical mechanism can't stand any mental strain.

Of course, Clarke was not accusing women of weakness but of misdirecting their vital energies. Will's response is similar to that of many of her contemporaries, which was to insist that women are *not* weak and then go out and prove it.

For herself, Will takes to heart Clarke's tirades against the harmful effects of wearing corsets, throws hers into the fire, and launches into a regime of rigorous physical exercise that includes chopping wood. She remains a paragon of physical health through the rest of her college days, earning admiration when she uses her strength to rescue Tom Phelps from drowning during a skating accident.³⁵

The Debate over Coeducation at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

By 1890, the National Council of Education decided almost unanimously that "both theory and practice confirmed the wisdom of coeducation." According to the council, coeducation "led to better discipline, more balanced instruction, and a healthier psychological and sexual

development of both boys and girls. Women had proved themselves equal to men in intellectual capacity, and the apocalyptic fears that study would undermine their health had been shown to be 'groundless.'" It concluded that the notion that studying the same subjects together would make women mannish and coarse and men less strong and courageous "will soon be numbered among the infinite host of dead theories that lie strewn all along the path of human progress."³⁶

Debates over the wisdom of coeducation continued, however. Elite private colleges in the East persisted in their refusal to admit women. In response to continuing pressure, they instead opened up "annexes" or "coordinate" women's colleges such as Harvard's Radcliffe, Brown's Pembroke, and Columbia's Barnard. No additional "boys' colleges" opened up to women until the 1950s. Equally significant, in the early 1900s a number of coeducational colleges returned to the idea of separate curricula for women or applied a quota on the number of women who might enroll in certain programs. The motivation behind this step was a fear that certain fields were becoming "feminized," especially those in the humanities such as English, history, modern languages, and classical studies.

By 1900 at Michigan, the proportion of women students had risen to 22 percent of the student body. They comprised about 47 percent in literary studies, while men remained the majority in scientific, technical, and professional fields such as law and medicine. Opponents of coeducation used this disparity as proof that the sexes required different curricula and that unless women were directed toward fields more "suitable" to them, such as domestic science or "home economics," men would be "driven out" of the humanistic fields altogether.³⁷ In the early twentieth century, of course, women's opportunities for professional attainment in scientific, technical, or professional fields were extremely limited. Women gravitated toward the humanities primarily because they could find employment in these fields. Nonetheless, coeducation's opponents continued to raise alarms about women "taking over" fields in the humanities.

Other fears played into renewed debates over coeducation. In the early 1900s, social commentators noted the decline of birth rates among college-educated women. In contrast, census data were suggesting that less well-educated peoples, including immigrants and people of color, were reproducing at much faster rates. Concerned that "the old native American stock" would soon lose its ascendancy, President Theodore Roosevelt warned of "race suicide." Although he did not blame higher

education for women's failure to reproduce, other social commentators did. In his monumental study of adolescence, an influential Clark University psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, devoted an entire chapter to "Adolescent Girls and Their Education." Following Edward Clarke, Hall accepted the idea of sexual divergence and saw motherhood as a girl's greatest fulfillment. "To be a true woman means to be yet more mother than wife," he wrote. He despaired of an educational system that persisted in training women for "independence and self-support," leaving matrimony and motherhood to "take care of itself." As periodicity, or the menstrual cycle, was "perhaps the deepest law of the cosmos," he argued that women of high-school age ought to be educated in separate schools "primarily and chiefly for motherhood."³⁸

As a result of such concerns, a number of colleges and universities began either to set up separate curricula for women and men students or to initiate quotas on women's admission. The University of Michigan was one of few major universities that refused to adopt policies of segregation, but after President Angell, the school's most ardent defender of coeducation, passed from the scene, Michigan set up a quota on women's admission to some programs.³⁹

Religion and Feminism in *An American Girl*

In addition to addressing the specific issues raised in Clarke's book, *An American Girl* develops two interrelated themes, those of liberal religion and feminism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, American Christianity had become increasingly liberalized. Like some other women of her time, Will Elliot rejects the strict view of salvation that marked the Presbyterian faith in which she had been raised. A key feature of Presbyterianism was the Westminster Catechism, a "confession of faith" rooted in seventeenth-century Calvinism that saw human beings as "naturally depraved" and predicted the salvation of only a select few of the "righteous." Will finds this theology repellant. Moreover, unlike pious churchgoers of her era, she refuses to seek a "conversion" experience through which she would commit her soul to Jesus. This "failure" gives her mother great anxiety. In the novel's first chapter, after Will's mother opposes Will's plan to attend college because it will ruin her daughter's health, she makes a second objection, "one outweighing all the others":

going to college will ruin her daughter's soul. Indeed, she predicts that, because Will has "never had a change of heart" and "never taken Jesus as [her] Saviour," her being "away from the restraints of home," where she will be "exposed to the temptations of college-life," will lead to her destruction.

Will never had the conversion experience her mother wished for her in part because of the influence of her mother's father. As we learn in the novel's first chapter, Will had spent some time in her grandfather's house after her mother was widowed. Her grandfather had "startled" his community by leaving the church at the age of thirty-five. Although he lived a charitable and moral life, his neighbors (and Will's mother) still think of him as an "infidel."⁴⁰ Will adored her grandfather. After his death, she finds his copy of Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus*, a biography published in 1863 that treats Jesus as a human being, not God. Drawing her even closer to her grandfather's humanistic views, this discovery alienates her further from her mother's Presbyterianism. Even as her mother presses a Bible, a hymn book, and a copy of the "Confession of Faith" on her and her local minister warns her to avoid the skeptical books she is bound to encounter at college, Will sets off for Ortonville hoping to leave religion behind.

Religion, however, follows her to college. In Ortonville, she is rarely free of social pressure to accept some denominational affiliation. Before Will's personal effects arrive at her new residence, her roommate, Clara, offers her the use of her own Bible (chap. II). When Will declines, Clara expostulates: "Aren't you a Christian, and don't you love Jesus?" Will manages to get along with her "churchy" roommate, who is the daughter of a Methodist minister and intends to become a missionary. But she pulls away (chap. III) when Clara insists that she attend a Sunday school class and almost breaks off the friendship when Clara tries to convince her that the imminent death of Will's sister "is intended . . . to draw you nearer to the Saviour." Will cries out in despair:

If that is the way your God treats those he loves, I don't want to know him. Pretty way to fill up heaven, by making earth so lonely and cold and wretched that we don't want to stay! Oh, it is too hideous to think of!

After attending a campus religious revival, again at Clara's urging, Will resists pressure (chap. VII) from a local minister to declare her religious

faith.⁴¹ Their heated discussion serves only to reinforce in Will her decision to interpret the Bible on her own and to refuse to accept a religion that condemns unbelievers to hellfire.⁴²

Some scholars have seen American women's rejection of a strict Calvinistic outlook as having feminized American religious culture. But Olive Anderson's protagonist is as tough-minded in her moral and spiritual outlook as any fire and brimstone cleric. Her sense of self is so strong that she is sure that neither a formal creed nor a conversion experience is a necessary condition for leading a good and pious life. Her free will and deeply held personal convictions are, to her, sufficient.⁴³

Will's religious nonconformity is of a piece with her social nonconformity. Although Anderson never shows her protagonist making an explicit link between these two aspects of her highly individualistic personality, she gives equal treatment to Will's religious independence and her strong commitment to "woman's rights." This was the term used in Anderson's time to designate an entire spectrum of social, educational, economic, and political privileges that "strong-minded" women were hoping to win.⁴⁴

Anderson's novel shows the extent to which the social ferment of the woman's movement had permeated university life by the early 1870s. It also demonstrates the strength of the resistance to the movement. The University of Michigan had admitted women medical students, but according to Anderson they had to fight their way through not only "bigoted opposition from men" but from women, too. "People were slow to believe that a woman could be truly womanly and work in the dissecting-room, attend clinics, and hear lectures on all sorts of dreadful subjects," she writes. Guilford Randolph, Will's beau, shares this view, as does a rural woman who takes Will in while she recovers from being struck by lightning (chap. IX). Being a doctor is "man's work," the woman avows, "and a woman that'll do it is not modest." Will's friend Nell approves of her plans to go to medical school, not because such a career would be fulfilling but because, if Will is ever widowed, she will be able to support herself. And, finally, a local doctor "welcomes" Will into the ranks of medicine when he sees how well she has cared for Randolph when he is injured, but when he perceives Randolph's love for her he says to himself, "I guess her practice of medicine will be limited to one household." In short, no one in Will's circle can accept the idea of a woman combining a medical career, or any career for that matter, with marriage.

Will's attitudes toward marriage are pertinent here. She claims (chap. V) that the "starch" goes out of girls when they become engaged to be married. "She loses ambition right away, and don't amount to anything forever after," Will says. She feels that girls should get married but despairs that "they settle right down and lose their individuality, and are as good as dead and buried." As for herself, she wants to "do something, have an object, be somebody." Mrs. Lewis, Will's landlady, gets the last word. As Will departs after graduation Mr. Lewis predicts that in the end their lodger will marry "that pair of handsome eyes," a reference to Randolph. Mrs. Lewis chides her husband for his conceit. "You think a woman never has an aim in life that she won't leave to go at your beck and call. I have more faith in our Will than that, and we'll see if I'm not right."

The novel explores other gender conventions of the day, including courtship customs and "tomboyism." In late-nineteenth-century America, girls were not supposed to talk to boys to whom they had not been formally introduced. Although Will Elliot and Guilford Randolph see each other in classes for almost two years, they do not have an extensive conversation until Nell and her boyfriend bring them together for a croquet game (chap. VIII).

Will's tomboyism reflects her independent spirit, but, as boyishness is not always attractive to men, it troubles her mind. When we first meet Randolph, he is disparaging her to his friends for "aping boys," criticizing her from her nickname down to her "boyish" hats. Her roommate Clara worries about Will's use of boys' slang and observes her hopelessness with a needle. To her, Will needs "taming," a conclusion reinforced when Will takes part in traditionally male-identified activities such as breaking a horse, hunting birds, and chopping wood.⁴⁵

Throughout the narrative, Will either takes issue with or breaches traditional feminine boundaries. She burns her corset. She cuts her hair short and shortens her skirts to keep them out of the mud. Randolph accepts these breaches until a society girl makes him feel ridiculous for liking Will as she is. When as a consequence he asks Will to wear longer dresses and a "switch" in her hair (to make it look longer) when they "go out," it is a clear sign of trouble. And when the society girl teases Randolph by suggesting that Will would make a husband care for the babies while she presides at a woman suffrage convention, the end of the relationship is at hand.

The Literary Dimensions of *An American Girl*

An American Girl is a roman à clef, an imaginative treatment of real people and events. Although such novels are often associated with satire, Anderson's was not designed to ridicule. Nor was it intended to present an entirely realistic portrayal of college life for Michigan co-eds in the early 1870s.

Some readers have taken the novel as realistic or at the very least an attempt at realism. In her history of women at Michigan, for example, Dorothy McGuigan accepts Will Elliot's tale of freshman year "persecutions" as historically accurate. Ruth Bordin, in her later study of the same subject, dismisses the tale as unrepresentative. Citing the testimony of Alice Freeman (later Palmer), who graduated from Michigan a year after Anderson, Bordin admits that Freeman felt she had been treated as a "curiosity" by townspeople. She then counters this admission with Freeman's insistence that Michigan professors "nurtured" her and her male student colleagues treated her with friendship.⁴⁶

Two decades after graduating from Michigan in 1876, Vassar College historian Lucy Maynard Salmon received a copy of *The Inlander*, a Michigan student paper, which carried a story written by Mary Louise Walker Hall about the early days of coeducation at Michigan. Hall mentioned Salmon's difficulty in finding housing when she arrived on campus in 1872, an experience purporting to echo that of Will Elliot in the novel. Hall wrote, rather dramatically, "Of that brave little band of girls, one, who subsequently became the wife of a professor in our University, tells how she and Miss Salmon (for many years since a professor at Vassar), wandered up and down the streets of Ann Arbor for three whole days trying to find a boarding place." In a private letter written to President Angell, Salmon denied the implication of the story. "I have no recollection of ever 'walking the streets three days to secure a boarding place,'" she wrote. "If I did so, it was because I could find no place to suit me not because no one would take me in. Of the six years I lived in Ann Arbor, four were in the same house so that my trouble could not have been excessive."⁴⁷

Two factors may account for the difference between the experiences of Anderson's character Will Elliot and those of the other Michigan women students. First, both Freeman and Salmon arrived at Michigan in 1872,

not only a year after Anderson but two years after Will's fictive arrival. By 1872, the town and student body had become more accustomed to women students. Second, Freeman had a "sunny" disposition that endeared her to townspeople, faculty, and students alike. Thus she might have had an easier time than Anderson in adjusting to life in Ann Arbor.⁴⁸ Although Anderson describes Will as also having many admirers, Will's personality—her strong convictions, unconventional behavior, and occasional bursts of hot temper and moodiness—set her apart from some of the other women in her class. Will's critical view of her first-year experiences was, for novelist Anderson, perfectly consistent with the temperament her creator had given her.

Salmon's denial of a hard time finding a welcome in Ann Arbor may have reflected a concern about the effect of Mary Louise Walker Hall's article. "I am growing fairly nervous over it," Salmon wrote President Angell, "for at every knock at my door I expect to see someone who asks, 'Did you walk the streets of Ann Arbor three days looking for a boarding place?'" Salmon worried that such accounts of the early days not only exaggerated women's early struggles, but were most of all "humiliating" and, for those readers not familiar with the real situation, "one more proof of the general disagreeableness and undesirability of coeducation." Given the turn-of-the-century backlash against coeducation, Salmon's insistence in 1896 that she had experienced nothing unpleasant in her first days in Ann Arbor is understandable.

Even though Anderson was not writing a history of coeducation at Michigan, students had fun deciphering the names of faculty, students, and events alluded to in her story, and therefore in our annotations to this edition we identify as many of these as possible. A copy of the novel in the University of Michigan's rare book collection contains the marginal notations of one of Anderson's friends, Cora Agnes Benneson, who made many of these identifications.⁴⁹ In addition to noting what she felt was "true," however, Benneson also noted what she saw as "exaggerated," or "no longer true" in her friend's portrayal of college life. Surely Benneson understood that Anderson had written an imaginative work, one based in a lived reality but tempered by a highly individualistic perspective.

Some students lauded the novel as a just account of the university's women pioneers. The editor of *The Chronicle*, Michigan's student newspaper, gave an enthusiastic assessment.

All of us have felt that some book (and of course a novel would be the *best* book) ought to be written, which should preserve some record of how Michigan University took the great step which gave to women educational advantages equal to those of men, and which should recount the story of the brave young pioneers who were the first to push their way into new and untried realms of action, and make straight the paths of learning, that all their weaker sisters might follow without fear. The story of these heroines of civilization has in this book been well told. . . . It is written in a clear, sparkling style, and has such a piquancy and dash about it that one could well believe that the heroine, "Will," or her prototype, was the author, who has penned a story so unique, so brimming with wit, and so far removed from the conventional novel of the day.⁵⁰

Any first-time author would have been well pleased with such a review.

Other reactions to the novel were less enthusiastic. "H.," who wrote to *The Chronicle's* editor anonymously, found the novel offensive and lashed out "at the frequent displays of poor taste in the treatment of real personages and happenings."

The description of the faculty is in point. It is unnecessary to particularize; even a stranger, if possessed of any delicate sense of propriety, would discover the things to which I allude, and would only be spared intense feelings of disgust because he did not know that real individuals were the subjects of this free handling. More than this, worn out gossip is introduced, which no one has any business to rehearse, least of all to publish.

H. then quotes from a review that appeared in the *Cornell Era*, Cornell University's student newspaper, which chided the novelist for the "weakness of the plot" and "the wearying recurrence of religious discussion."⁵¹ Despite Anderson's many references to student reading, H. also chided SOLA (Anderson's pen name) for failing to give any

hint of the intellectual life of study and reading which absorbs the average woman in college, but implies that match-making is the principal business. Without doubt the objection is well founded,

although it did not occur prominently to myself. There are some of both sexes, perhaps, who take up the development of the tender passion as a sort of special elective, and with some ambitious souls it may form even a fifth study, counting possibly for ten hours a week. But such cases are phenomenal—purely phenomenal.⁵²

Finally, H. quotes from a letter written by a Michigan alumna that had appeared in a local newspaper: “On the whole,” the alumna wrote, “the book, which might have said so much that is interesting to recall and of advantage to know, is a little volume that the University girls who have read it look upon as a dishonor to the University, and one through which they have been deeply wronged. In every respect it is quite unworthy of the author.”⁵³

We can only speculate whether Anderson, who by then was residing in California, received news of these comments. If she had, this might explain why Sarah Dix Hamlin, the writer of Anderson’s obituary, claimed that Anderson had come to regret “deeply and bitterly” having published the novel. She certainly was not the kind of person who took joy from the pain of others.⁵⁴

In addition to being a roman à clef, *An American Girl* is also a sentimental novel. This kind of novel uses the feelings of a main character and his or her emotional relations with others to move the plot along. By the mid-nineteenth century, both men and women had written sentimental novels, but they were especially popular with middle-class women readers. This popularity prompted some male writers and critics to associate such novels with women, domesticity, and all things trivial and overdone.⁵⁵

Some writers, however, used the sentimental genre to tremendous effect. As one scholar has shown, writers with social agendas and little publishing clout could use the genre as a vehicle for “legitimizing conventions” and “engendering solidarities.”⁵⁶ In the 1850s, Harriet Beecher Stowe achieved widespread sympathy for the abolition of slavery with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the epitome of the agenda-based sentimental novel. In her concluding remarks to the novel, Stowe directly addresses her readers, instructing them to “feel right”: “There is one thing that every individual can do,—they can see to it that they feel right. An atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who feels strongly, healthily and justly, on the great interests of

humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies in this matter!"⁵⁷

In *An American Girl*, Wilhelmine Elliot is the only character whose thoughts and feelings readers are privileged to know. As they go through the novel, readers "feel" along with Will, empathizing with her in her struggles and triumphs.⁵⁸ Perhaps Anderson intended her novel to engender solidarity among women or at least to make an emotional argument against the opponents of coeducation and in favor of freeing women from oppressive social conventions. In any case, Anderson wields the accepted formulas of the sentimental novel in a way that creates empathy in her readers for those who violate accepted social norms.

Will is a rebel. She rejects many social strictures, from her church catechism to her own corset, too binding for her to bear. By placing her strong-minded character within the conventions of the sentimental novel, Anderson wins sympathy for her. One contemporary charge against the woman's movement was that it "unsexed" women, that is, made them into putative men. Will might cut her hair and burn her corset, chop wood, go hunting, and tame ornery horses, but she can still be beautiful to look at and can fall in love with a man. The advocates of coeducation argued similarly: women could study with men and take the same academic courses without losing their femininity or harming their reproductive capacity. Ironically, the literary limits of the sentimental novel reflect the larger cultural limitations of the post-Civil War woman's movement, which insisted that women constantly had to prove that they could take on larger public roles without becoming Amazons.

The conventions of the sentimental novel are all present in *An American Girl*. The invalid yet angelic younger sister, Hally, who is very much like the precocious Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, provides the necessary religious and sympathetic foil to Will. As Will's confessor, conscience, and advocate, she softens Will's untraditional character. With her body broken in a carriage accident, Hally presents the antithesis of the healthy and strong-minded Will. Hally is all heart (emotion) and soul (she has been "saved"). In short, Hally "feels right" on Will's behalf. As *The Chronicle* reviewer wrote, "The story of Hally's death [is] as pathetic and touching as though [it] had come from the magic pen of Bret Harte."⁵⁹

Homosocial intimacy is another feature of the sentimental novel that is prominent in Anderson's novel. Will shares domestic space with many other female characters, her sister Hally at home and her roommates Nell

and Clara at Ortonville. Her relationships with them express the importance of female bonding (with both verbal and physical expressions of love) and reflect the gender-specific world of the sentimental novel. Furthermore, they temper Will Elliot's rebellious nature, with each presenting various aspects and degrees of respectable femininity (from her best friend Nell, who is highly marriage-conscious yet religiously liberal, to her roommate Clara, a missionary type who is deeply devoted to saving others). These women, along with the distant influence of her invalid sister, repeatedly come to Will's rescue whenever she goes "too far." And when she does transgress boundaries she either suffers the consequences and engenders sympathy in the reader through the sympathy of her friends or she triumphs and fills her family and friends—and thus the reader—with empathetic pride. As part of the story, then, these female characters keep the headstrong Will safely within the confines of sentimental literary conventions.

While the issue of racial prejudice is an important theme in some sentimental novels of the era, most notably, of course, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it is barely present in *An American Girl*. Only two persons of color appear in the novel, a lisping servant boy who turns Will away from a boardinghouse and a "trickster" barber to whom she repairs when she decides to cut her hair. The novel is about a middle-class white woman from a small town in Ohio, and the small cultural universe in which Will Elliott and Olive San Louie Anderson moved seems to have lacked meaningful interactions with African Americans. Perhaps, like other feminists of her era, Anderson was more concerned with issues of gender than with those of race. Thus, she provides her readers with only stereotypical black characters, a lisping servant and a "trickster" barber.

Of these two encounters, the one with the barber is the more interesting. Will goes to the "dusky son of Ham,"⁶⁰ as Anderson describes him, on impulse (chap. VIII). The barber registers her instructions about length with a grin, saying "Yes, miss; all right." She is so busy memorizing an ode for class that she pays no attention to the results, merely throwing a scarf over her head at the end and heading for home. Back at her boardinghouse, the horrified faces of her friends register "the crime." He had sheared her hair so short that "one could not catch it with thumb and finger." "Will Elliott! what have you done?—you're ruined!" her friends shriek. Will is mortified: "O girls! he has ruined my head for life—ruined!"

The word *ruined* carries sexual connotations. A ruined woman is one

who has lost her virginity and is thus unfit for marriage. Will has been tricked, but she has also been violated, as “the rape of her locks” implies. The declaration of her landlord, Mr. Lewis, that he will horsewhip the barber makes the act all the more redolent of a common white male response to a presumed black violation of white womanhood. The barber has not raped Will, of course, but he has nonetheless violated her by depriving her of her femininity. The next day Will must display this fact to her male classmates. The boys in her class guffaw at the sight of her shorn head and tease her with the name Captain Elliott. In the end, Will takes the blame for her impulsiveness, Mr. Lewis is talked out of his urge to commit racial violence, and her friends’ sympathy for her plight tames the teasing boys. The Michigan women bond with Will in female empathy, later admitting that she looks better with short hair. The aesthetics of sentiment (feeling Will’s pain and redemption) thus diffuse the potential explosiveness of race and even vindicate her nonconformity.

As in all sentimental novels, domesticity itself plays a key role. Despite the university setting, the important character interactions take place largely within private, domestic spaces: Will’s home and her boarding-house rooms. Will has adventures outside of these spaces (in the classroom, on horseback, on ice skates, at the debate podium), but she always returns to the private spaces where womanly feelings dominate. There she finds refuge in the sympathy and support of female bonding. Moreover, domestic concerns hover in the near future. Her stormy relationship with Guilford Randolph—whose promises of love come with the certainty of more social conventions to bind Will—ends bitterly, and Will is freed for the rest of the story from this future of domestic limitation by Randolph’s own (as she sees it) inability to empathize with her nonconformity. Yet as the novel ends a future partnership between Will and Randolph is still a possibility. Limited by the social constraints of late-nineteenth-century gender expectations, Anderson allows at least some of the conventions of the sentimental novel to prevail.

As we know, the conventions of sentimentality did not prevail in the life of Olive San Louie Anderson. After her graduation from Michigan, she moved to California to become a teacher and school administrator. At the time of her death, she was planning a trip abroad and reaching for new heights as a creative writer. She enjoyed many warm friendships and the companionship of a group of like-minded, creative young adults of both sexes. She had not married. Was this because in entering a marital

relationship she would have had to subordinate her own interests and ambitions to those of her husband? Possibly. Many intellectual women of her era felt that heterosexual marriage was too constraining. Some chose instead to enter into the lifelong romantic partnerships with women that were often called "Boston marriages."⁶¹

We do not know whether Anderson enjoyed such a relationship. It is possible that Elizabeth Curtis, who edited her final writings, or Sarah Dix Hamlin, who wrote her obituary, were special friends. But the pen name Anderson chose for *An American Girl*, SOLA, seems to hint otherwise. In addition to being an anagram of her initials, the word suggests a strong commitment to independence. Thus, Anderson may have planned a life course as a teacher and writer completely "on her own."

Olive San Louie Anderson was certainly of an independent mind; the mere act of writing and publishing a novel takes both independence and courage. We are grateful to her for having left us *An American Girl*, a novel to enjoy and appreciate on several levels. As a testament to middle-class women's desires for higher education, it makes a singular contribution to the intellectual history of late-nineteenth-century American women. As a feminist novel, it brings to life a period, not so far in the past, when Americans took for granted women's exclusion from the halls of academe as well as from the professions. Finally, as an imaginative depiction of the coming "American girl" it portrays a heroine with whom we can identify. Will Elliot may be a character rooted in the Victorian era, but she harbored within her soul aspirations for personal and intellectual fulfillment that many modern readers will recognize in themselves.

NOTES

1. See Dorothy Gies McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment: 100 Years of Women at the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), chaps. 3–4; and Ruth Bordin, *Women at Michigan: The "Dangerous Experiment," 1870s to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 1. The phrase "dangerous experiment" comes from the regents' own description of coeducation: "By many it is regarded as a doubtful experiment, by some as a very dangerous experiment . . . certain to be ruinous to the young ladies who should avail themselves of it . . . and disastrous to the institution which should carry it out" (quoted in Bordin, *Women at Michigan*, xvi).

2. Both historians wrote their studies under the auspices of the University of Michigan's Center for the Education of Women. Bordin wrote hers in order to bring McGuigan's up to date and to apply insights drawn from works in women's history

published since McGuigan completed her study. See also Bordin's biography of Alice Palmer, a Michigan graduate who went on to become president of Wellesley College, *Alice Freeman Palmer: The Evolution of a New Woman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, and online at <http://www.press.umich.edu/bookhome/bordin/>).

3. In this era, students who had not graduated from Michigan high schools accredited by the university presented themselves to its professors to be examined orally. Students with deficiencies could make them up by working with senior tutors. See Bordin, *Women at Michigan*, 14.

4. Most of the following information comes from Sarah Dix Hamlin's "Olive San Louie Anderson, Class of '75, Obituary" (June 5, 1886), 20 pp., Sarah Dix Hamlin Paper, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan (hereafter BHL). In soliciting subscriptions for a memorial booklet of stories and sketches Anderson's friends intended to publish, Hamlin gave her address as 1606 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco. This suggests that the friendship she began with Anderson at Michigan continued in California.

5. The reference here is, of course, to Jo March, the protagonist of Louisa May Alcott's famous novel, *Little Women* (1868–69). Apparently some members of Olive's family called her "Louie," another masculine name. See note 8.

6. This description of Anderson's talk comes from "The University, Concluding Proceedings of the Board of Regents, the Exercises of Commencement Day," *Tribune* (July 1, 1875), p. 31, Scrapbook Vol. III, Box 22, Alexander Winchell Papers, BHL.

7. As Hamlin points out, Anderson was not alone in her views. She writes, "Scarcely a girl at the University was not strong-minded, in that she disdained weak-mindedness, and had a contempt for affectation, silliness, and inactivity. . . ."

8. In a diary entry dated June 25, 1886, Anderson's sixteen-year-old cousin Nina Cook wrote, "We got word last Sunday of cousin Louie Anderson's death. It did not seem possible that she could die, for she was so strong and daring and brave. She was bathing in the Sacramento river and was drowned. We have had no word since. Her body was not found until quite a while afterwards. I believe she got in sort of a whirlpool. This is the ending to her book, *An American Girl and her Four Years in a Boy's College*, which itself had no end." See www.stumpranchonline.com/skagitjournal/S-W/Pioneer/Cook/Cook02-NinaDiary.html (accessed May 9, 2005).

9. For an extensive discussion of these attitudes, see the classic work of Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

10. Today we would use the term *women's movement*, but in the nineteenth century activists used the term *woman*, calling their movement the *woman's movement* and their meetings *woman's rights conventions*. For an introduction to the nineteenth-century woman's movement, see Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). For the text of the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," on which those attending the Seneca Falls convention (held in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19–20, 1848) voted, see Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, eds., *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage: Selections from the Classic Work of Stanton, Anthony, Gage, and Harper* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 91–97. The declaration can also be found in almost every anthology of feminist historical documents. For information on women intellectuals of the early nineteenth century, see Susan Conrad, *Perish the Thought: Intellectual Women in Romantic America, 1830–1860* (New

York: Oxford University Press, 1976); and Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

11. See Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). In the United States, normal schools trained primary-school teachers. The first was founded in Massachusetts in 1839; others followed in the 1840s. Many of today's major universities began as normal schools, but the term is no longer used today. Most teacher training now takes place in college or university education departments or graduate schools.

12. For more on the history of women's education, see Ellen F. Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Roger Geiger, ed., *The American College in the Nineteenth Century* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000); Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); Carol Lasser, ed., *Educating Men and Women Together: Coeducation in a Changing World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press in conjunction with Oberlin College, 1987); Janice Lee, "Administrative Treatment of Women Students at Missouri State University, 1868-1899," *Missouri Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (July 1993): 372-86; Mabel Newcomer, *A Century of Higher Education for Women* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1959); Pat Palmieri, *In Adamless Eden: The Community of Women at Wellesley* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); David B. Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States* (New York: Science Press, 1929). Chapter 3 of Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work: The Rise of Women's Political Culture, 1830-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), offers a good description of coeducational life at Cornell University in the early 1870s.

13. Lori D. Ginzberg, "The Joint Education of the Sexes: Oberlin's Original Vision," in *Educating Men and Women Together*, edited by Carol Lasser, 67-80 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press in conjunction with Oberlin College, 1987); and Ronald W. Hogeland, "Coeducation of the Sexes at Oberlin College: A Study of Social Ideas in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Social History* 6, no. 2 (1972-73): 160-76.

14. In the nineteenth century, mixed-sex audiences were called "promiscuous," a meaning for the word no longer in current usage.

15. For more on Antioch's early days of coeducation, see John Rury and Glenn Harper, "The Trouble with Coeducation: Mann and Women at Antioch, 1853-1860," *History of Education Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (winter 1986): 481-502; and McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, 21.

16. See Doris Malkmus, "Origins of Coeducation in Antebellum Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* 58 (spring 1999): 162-96. According to Malkmus, conservative midwestern denominations raised money from eastern philanthropists to found all-male colleges in

the West, but these were never successful. Neither were all-female seminaries. In 1853, noted educator Catharine Beecher went West to offer money to communities interested in establishing a female seminary. Only Dubuque, Iowa, followed through, but the seminary that opened there in 1857 attracted only eighty students to a building designed for two hundred and soon failed, as did other "genteel" female seminaries founded in Iowa (170, 174). See also pages 178–79, where Malkmus writes: "Since many students found spouses while at college, educating sons or daughters at the college of another denomination meant risking that their children would marry outside the faith."

17. See "Discussion of the Same Subject (The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States since the Emancipation Proclamation) by Mrs. A. J. Cooper of Washington, D.C.," in *The World's Congress of Representative Women*, edited by May Wright Sewall, 711–15 (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1894). The schools Cooper mentioned in her 1893 speech included Hampton, Fisk, Atlanta, Raleigh, Wilberforce, Livingstone, Allen, and Paul Quinn.

18. Edward Hicks Magill, *An Address upon the Co-education of the Sexes* (Philadelphia: Charles A. Dixon, 1873), 5–6. Helen Magill, his brilliant daughter, was the first woman in the nation to earn a Ph.D. See her biography in *Notable American Women, 1607–1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer, 3:588–89 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), under Helen Magill White. In her forties, Helen Magill became the second wife of Cornell University's president, Andrew Dickson White; White and her father had been college colleagues.

19. Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862, the Morrill Act (named after Congressman Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont) was designed to fund practical education for the nation's farmers and workers. The act granted public lands to states in the amount of thirty thousand acres for each member of a state's congressional delegation. The states were to sell the land and use the proceeds to endow colleges that would teach agriculture and "the mechanic arts" (such as engineering) in addition to regular academic subjects. As a result of the act, more than seventy land-grant colleges were established in the Middle and Far West. A second Morrill Act, passed in 1890, extended its provisions to sixteen southern states, with the grants divided equally between white and black schools.

20. Roger L. Geiger, "The Era of Multipurpose Colleges in American Higher Education, 1850–1890," in *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Roger L. Geiger, 141–42 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000); Bordin, *Women at Michigan*, 3–4.

21. The university was founded in 1817, but its state charter dates from 1837.

22. Except for the quotation from Lyman Beecher, this reconstruction of the regents' discussion is based on McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, chap. 3; and Bordin, *Women at Michigan*, chap. 1. The Beecher quotation comes from Robert Samuel Fletcher, *History of Oberlin College from Its Foundation through the Civil War* (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943), 377.

23. Among the faculty members favoring coeducation were Alexander Winchell, Professor of Geology, and James Robinson Boise, Professor of Greek. In 1866, Winchell pondered the question of women and wrote an essay entitled "Woman: Her Actual Place and Her Rightful Place," which he read at a "Senate Social" on January 26. Boise,

the father of the brilliant Alice, had been the only faculty member to favor women's admission in 1858, saying that "No reason urged against the admission of ladies is sufficient for its denial." See McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, 26–29.

24. These anecdotes all come from McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, chaps. 4 and 5. The quotation from the *Michigan Argus* is on page 33. For similar views on the debilitating effect of women's menstrual cycles, see the subsequent discussion of Dr. Edward Clarke's famous book, *Sex in Education*.

25. Quoted in McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, chap. 6.

26. *Ibid.*, chap. 9 and p. 87; Bordin, *Women at Michigan*, 31–34. Mosher remained at Michigan for only six years. For a biography of her, see *Notable American Women, 1607–1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer, 2:587–88 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). The chaired appointments that the University of Michigan made in the 1950s were in the Psychology and History Departments.

27. See McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, 50. In *An American Girl* (chap. VI), Will debates the virtues of coeducation in an exchange of letters with a friend, "Mame," who is a student at Vassar. In her response, Mame claims that she is "as free here as it is possible to be in an institution of the kind. I'd like to see you put four hundred girls together, and leave no particular rules and no one in particular to see that they behave!"

28. McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, 61. She quotes the university's president, James Burrill Angell, who in 1883 wrote: "We have no rules prescribing their conduct in the hours of recreation, save the general rule that their conduct shall everywhere be such as is becoming."

29. The first generations of college women tended to be older because they enjoyed less financial support from parents and usually had to spend several years teaching to earn enough to meet their college expenses. In the novel, Will's roommate, Clara Hopkins, is two years older than Will and had taught in a primary school before being able to afford college tuition. The introduction of a regulatory system in the 1890s may also have been a response to pressure from the young women themselves, who enjoyed the experience of homosocial bonding in separate women's facilities. The first dean to establish "approved" rooming houses for women was Eliza Mosher's successor, Myra Beach Jordan; the first dormitories appeared after 1915. See *ibid.*, 111; and Bordin, *Women at Michigan*, 35–37.

30. The book saw seventeen printings in all. The last was in 1886, by which time the controversy had died down but not ended. Clarke published a sequel, *The Building of a Brain*, in 1874, which provided supporting evidence from educators for his conclusions. The copy we refer to here is the fifth printing, published in Boston by James R. Osgood and Company in 1874.

31. Clarke, *Sex in Education*, 27, 127, 19.

32. For informative discussions of Clarke and his ideas, see Sue Zschoche, "Dr. Clarke Revisited: Science, True Womanhood, and Female Collegiate Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1989): 545–69; Patricia A. Palmieri, "From Republican Motherhood to Race Suicide: Arguments on the Higher Education of Women in the United States, 1820–1920," in *Educating Men and Women Together*, edited by Carol Lasser, 49–64 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press in conjunction with Oberlin College, 1987); McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, chap. 8; and Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: The Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New

Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 5–27. Rosenberg notes that Clarke himself had to drop out of Harvard due to a “hemorrhage from the lungs” (10, n. 22). For more on evolutionary biology, see Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

33. Clarke, *Sex in Education*, 23, 92–94.

34. Writer and poet Julia Ward Howe was one of the first feminist respondents to Clarke. See the book she edited in 1874, *Sex and Education: A Reply to Dr. E. H. Clarke's 'Sex in Education'* (New York: Arno Press, 1972). The scientific survey appeared in Annie Howes, “Health Statistics of Women College Graduates: Report of a Special Committee of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae” (Boston, 1885). This association was the forerunner of today’s American Association of University Women. Sue Zschoche notes that the publication of their statistics ended Clarke’s popularity, though an obituary for his views was premature. For Clarke, “periodicity” was the law of women’s biology. Feminists might argue that women’s “will” could overcome the force of this law, but according to Zschoche the idea that it dominated women’s physiological makeup “remained central to medical and psychological views of women and their education well into the twentieth century” (“Dr. Clarke Revisited,” 563). Concerned about declining birth rates among educated women (which surely were more the result of choice than sterility brought on by excessive brain work), by the turn of the century educational reformers were arguing that “most” women wanted to fulfill their “femininity” through an education that was “different” from that given to men. By the second decade of the twentieth century, educators had rejected the “ungendered” education craved by the first generations of college women.

35. Although townspeople interpret the physical failures of two women students in Will’s sophomore year as proof of Clarke’s premises, Anderson is quick to point out that male students fell ill as well (chap. VIII).

36. Tyack and Hansot, *Learning Together*, 104.

37. In 1908, Julius Sachs, a professor of education at Teachers’ College, Columbia University, reaffirmed sex differences when he argued that women should not “duplicate the effort and pursuits of young men when other subjects for which they are particularly fitted are still ignored.” Unless they are redirected toward fields (which he never names) for which they are “fitted,” men will continue to voluntarily segregate themselves from literary courses because they think of them as feminized. See Julius Sachs, “In the Educational World,” *Literary Digest* 37, no. 4 (July 25, 1908): 125–26.

38. G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (New York: D. Appleton, 1904), 2:627, 632, 635, 639. Clarke announced his concerns about the future of “the race” in his *Sex in Education*: “If the culture of the race moves on into the future in the same rut and by the same methods that limit and direct it now; if the education of the sexes remains identical, instead of being appropriate and special; and especially if the intense and passionate stimulus of the identical co-education of the sexes is added to their identical education,—then the sterilizing influence of such a training, acting with tenfold more force upon the female than upon the male, will go on, and the race will be propagated from its inferior classes” (139).

39. McGuigan, *A Dangerous Experiment*, 104–6.

40. For a discussion of a famous nineteenth-century woman who also rejected Calvinism, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 246ff.

41. On religious revivals at Michigan, see Philip Harrold, "A Transitional Period in Belief: Deconversion and the Decline of Campus Revivals in the 1870s," in *Embodying the Spirit: New Perspectives on North American Revivalism*, edited by Michael J. McClymond, 109–24 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). Reinforcing Harrold's observation of "decline," the campus reviewer of *An American Girl* wrote: "The religious ideas in the book are not subjects for a criticism in this place, although we must say that it is refreshing to read a novel which introduces religious discussions in the story without converting all the characters to orthodoxy in the last chapter." See "An American Girl and Her Four Years in a Boys' College," *The Chronicle* 9, no. 8 (February 2, 1878): 117–18 (hereafter *Chronicle* review).

42. "I beg to be spared further persuasion, Mr. Allison," an indignant Will exclaims (chap. VII), avowing that "I shall never be brought to become a Christian on the terms you present; they only repel my affections and degrade my reason." Through her friendship with Nellie Holmes, who attends a Unitarian church, she thinks she might find solace in a religion that emphasizes a loving God. But she remains skeptical, especially when she is feeling miserable over the end of her relationship with Randolph. "If I believe in any almighty Power," she says in despair, "it is in one who delights in our wretchedness—one who loves to make us trust in people, and then show us how foolish we are to do so" (chap. XI).

43. Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977) takes a dim view of the nineteenth-century rejection of Calvinism, which she blames on "effeminate" ministers and sentimental women writers. Olive Anderson's protagonist defies this stereotyping. Unlike the "weak" and "sentimental" women Douglas studied, Anderson was a feminist who both rejected Calvinism and remained strong-minded; in addition, she sometimes behaves in stereotypically "masculine" ways. For more on the controversy aroused by Douglas's book and sexual stereotypes in literature, see David S. Reynolds, "The Feminization Controversy: Sexual Stereotypes and the Paradoxes of Piety in Nineteenth-Century America," *New England Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (March 1980): 96–106.

44. By the time Anderson was writing, many woman's rights activists had, in varying ways, set themselves up against institutionalized religion. Frances ("Fanny") Wright (1795–1852), one of the early-nineteenth-century's most notorious "freethinkers," linked women's subordination to the influence of priests. Later in the century Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) published *The Woman's Bible* (1895), a critique of scripture and the church for having limited women's sphere of action. Anderson's protagonist took a more moderate position, never directly attacking either priests, church, or Bible but simply declaring her independence from all "confessions of faith." On Wright, see Celia Morris Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); and Lori Ginzberg, "The Hearts of Your Readers Will Shudder: Fanny Wright, Infidelity, and American Freethought," *American Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (June 1994): 195–226. On Stanton and the Bible, see Kathi Kern, *Mrs. Stanton's Bible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

45. On tomboyism in the nineteenth century, see Sharon O'Brien, "Tomboyism and Adolescent Conflict: Three Nineteenth-Century Case Studies," in *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History*, edited by Mary Kelley, 351–72 (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), a study of the conflicts endured by Frances Willard, Willa Cather, and Louisa May Alcott between their free and independent childhoods and the lessons in submissive domesticity they had to learn after puberty.

46. Bordin, *Alice Freeman Palmer*, 44; *Women at Michigan*, 10–13. See also Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

47. Lucy Salmon to President Angell, April 29, 1896, Folder 155, Box 4, James B. Angell Papers, BHL.

48. Bordin thinks that Anderson was describing Freeman when she wrote the following of one of Will's friends, Nellie Holmes: "At first glance you would say she had not a single element of beauty. Her hair was red, and her nose had a decided inclination to turn up; she had freckles and light eyebrows, and yet no person became acquainted with Nellie Holmes who did not think her beautiful, and before her college life was over, more than half a dozen boys had fallen hopelessly in love with her, and raved about her beauty, while she was a paragon of loveliness to all the girls in the class." One problem with ascribing this description to Freeman is that "Nellie Holmes" was a Unitarian while Freeman was a Presbyterian. As Bordin writes (*Alice Freeman Palmer*, 51): "Until she married, Alice Freeman's formal religious affiliation was always with the Presbyterian church. She joined the Windsor congregation at fourteen, and in January of 1873 transferred her membership by letter to the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor. Again in 1875 when she interrupted her Ann Arbor years to teach in Illinois, she attended the Presbyterian church in Ottawa as a matter of course." In any event, Nellie Holmes may have been a composite character.

49. The copy of the novel that we originally obtained through Interlibrary Loan from the University of Missouri Library also had penciled notations in the margin but by an unknown hand.

50. *Chronicle* review, 117.

51. The *Cornell Era's* review concluded, derisively, "Although we are neither 'a prim old lady, who spent our maiden days in needle work, or proper waiting, until some man should come along and marry us,' nor are we 'a young lady pursuing the same career,' nevertheless for ourselves we can merely say, Providence and the maiden permitting we will never marry that kind of girl."

52. "Correspondence," *The Chronicle* 9, no. 11 (March 16, 1878): 166–67.

53. *The Post and Tribune*, January 31, 1878.

54. Hamlin, "Olive San Louie Anderson," 9.

55. For more on sentimental literature, see June Howard, "What Is Sentimentality?" *American Literary History* 11, no. 1 (1999): 70–71, 75. Other works that tackle the subject of sentiment as a social construct and literary device include Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels about Women in America, 1820–1870*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*; Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); and Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). The writer Henry James derided sentimentality as affectation in opposition to "real" human feeling. Twentieth-century literary scholars describe sentimentality as "emotional response in excess of the occasion; emotional response which has not been prepared for in the story in question." Critics continue to

cast sentimentality in literature and other narrative forms, such as theater and film, as unreal, exaggerated, and manipulative. This is true even of those scholars who seek to redeem its value as a valid area of inquiry.

56. See Howard, "What Is Sentimentality?" 74.

57. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Bantam, [1852] 1981), 442.

58. The reviewer wrote that "all through the book are little gems of description and deft transcriptions of human feeling which show no ordinary power in the author" (*Chronicle* review, 118).

59. *Ibid.* According to June Howard, Bret Harte was one of the few male writers critically condemned for employing the language of sentimentality. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, in *Understanding Fiction* (New York: F. S. Crofts, 1943), deride Harte for his sentimentality when, as Howard sees it, they are actually most offended by Harte's "failure to defend family values" by allowing wife stealing to be forgiven and an elopement to stand unchallenged. See Howard, "What Is Sentimentality?" 75.

60. This is a biblical reference to the presumably "dark" sons of Ham, descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, and the progenitors of Africans. See Gen. 9:25.

61. The term may have come from Henry James's novel *The Bostonians* (1886), which satirized strong female friendships in the Boston woman's movement. Scholars agree that some, though not all, of the female "marriages" of this era involved not only romance but also sexual intimacy. For more perspectives on these relationships, see John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), and Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women, from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: Morrow, 1981).