

**Of Factories and Failures:
Exploring the Invisible Factory Gates
of Horatio Alger, Jr.**

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Introduction

What happens to the growing young bootblacks, newsboys, and street urchins who surround the hero in Horatio Alger, Jr.'s Gilded Age tales? What lot falls to someone who does *not* succeed? What does success save Alger's heroes *from*? Such questions lead to a rather novel way of thinking about Alger's success formulas.

The Gilded Age characters of Horatio Alger, Jr. have long been treated as symbols of success, but that success is much misunderstood. A few astute readers have seen that, for Alger, the meaning of success is not identical with the acquisition of wealth. The stories stress the importance of morality, the prevalence of middle-class occupations and modest rewards, and the unattractiveness of selfish materialism.¹ What has been less well recognized is Alger's rootedness in the economic transformations of the second half of the Nineteenth Century, and the role these transformations play in the definition of success.

It is my contention that, in Alger's fiction, economic success is measured against common and undesirable outcomes of the Gilded Age. The author of over one hundred juvenile tales arranged to rescue his characters from some of the worst consequences of an industrializing economy. Heroes acquire the ability to distance themselves from hardship, economic marginality, and instability which are ever-present in these novels. Failure is the backdrop against which success is defined in Alger's universe, and factory labor is clearly part of the lot one seeks to escape.

The Most Visible Failures

With the intervention of benefactors and surrogate parents, Alger heroes and a few of their companions are helped out of poverty and through the dangerous shoals of adolescence. Not all are. "Turning bad" is the most frequent scenario Alger envisioned for those who are not rescued. Youngsters who cannot earn a living wage by their labors and those who develop vices are likely to turn to crime (see Figure 1).



Fig. 1. Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years' Work Among Them* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872), reprinted NASW Classics Series, n.d. National Association of Social Workers. Permission is granted.

Adult criminals are found in virtually all Alger stories, especially those who live off the honest earnings of others—pickpockets, highwaymen, kidnappers, counterfeiters, forgers, confidence men. Many adult failures have fallen prey to drink and gambling. Tramps wander the countryside in the summer or lounge on City Hall Park benches, surviving by begging or stealing. Charles Loring Brace, social worker and author, friend of Alger and provider of some of his source material, included in the “Proletaires of New York” a large class of criminals and paupers, the only saving grace of whom is that this life is not yet “so deeply stamped in the blood” as their English counterparts. The “dangerous classes” of New York “. . . are as ignorant as London flashmen or costermongers. They are far more brutal than the peasantry from whom they descend. . . .”²

Female street urchins had little to look forward to (Figure 2). According to Brace, who set up a lodging house for some of these girls which provided instruction in morals and in economic self-sufficiency, many of these girls could be expected to end up in a life of prostitution.³ Alger rescues heroine Tattered Tom on the brink of adolescence and returns her to the care and moral supervision of her long lost mother. Better yet, a vehicle is provided for the salvation of more girls:

For her sake, her mother loses no opportunity of succoring those homeless waifs, who, like her own daughter, are exposed to the discomforts and privations of the street, and through her liberality and active benevolence more than one young Arab has been reclaimed, and is likely to fill a respectable place in society.⁴

One measure of success, then, is that young people who succeed preserve their morals and good character intact where family and clergy are no longer present as moral influences. For little boys too young to fend for themselves (e.g., Phil, the Fiddler and Mark, the Match Boy), as well as for female street urchins, triumph means return to real or adoptive parents, upon whom they can depend for economic security and moral influence.

Not all the poor are criminal. Brace observed that there are, in addition to vagrants and criminal elements in New York,

still other tens of thousands, poor, hard-pressed, and depending for daily bread on the day's earnings, swarming in tenement-houses, who behold the gilded rewards of toil all about them, but are never permitted to touch them.⁵

Alger's homeless men and women are occasionally glimpsed in tenement lodging houses, sleeping en masse on straw-covered floors. Others inhabit community poor homes and even asylums. Squalid, crowded, tenements sometimes house heroes or acquaintances. Perhaps these places of squalor house the grown-ups in Alger who are not bad but rather

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Fig. 2. Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years' Work Among Them* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872), reprinted NASW Classics Series, n.d. National Association of Social Workers. Permission is granted.

apparently lack the right disposition or will to succeed. One is told that some dispirited individuals have simply given up, lacking courage to deal with setbacks.

Despite occasional glimpses of men walking the streets in search of work, most of the poor on display are widows, orphans, invalids, and those who have succumbed to vice. But what of those who have no cushion protecting them from having to accept work on any terms offered? Where are the *working* poor?

Women are not infrequently depicted in Alger as hard-working poor. Females who labor are likely to be shown engaged in the process of manufacture, though they work in their homes as hatmakers and seamstresses. These widows and single women are paid by the piece, and generally cannot achieve self-sufficiency though they work long hours. Women, unlike men, are not geographically mobile in Alger's world; they have fewer opportunities, and are more dependent upon their employers. A kindly character in *Rufus and Rose* was entirely dependent on her earnings as a seamstress; she had to sit and labor from early morning until evening, and barely earned enough to survive.⁶ She clearly was losing her health, and could earn only a third of what the hero did selling newspapers. When asked whether they won't pay her any more, she replies:

No, they find plenty who are ready to take their work at the price they are willing to pay. If anybody complains, they take away their work and employ somebody else.⁷

A similar experience is described in *Helen Ford*. A character who sews constantly finds her wages decreased twenty percent because shops were giving out less work while more people desired work; "many could not obtain a chance to work at any price." Here, Alger forcefully editorializes:

Perhaps no employment is more confining and more poorly compensated than that of sewing. The narrow choice allowed to women, who are compelled to labor for their livelihood, leads to an unhealthy and disastrous competition in this department of toil, and enables employers to establish a disgracefully low scale of prices [here Alger refers the reader to an article in the "Atlantic Monthly"].⁸

This grim picture does not allow much hope of success apart from rescue. The best case provides either for marriage or for installation in the home of a hero who has made good.

These are the most visible classes that Alger's boys and girls stand to join if they are not successful. But these are not the only classes—

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and outcomes—from which the hero must be rescued in Alger. Far less visible, but arguably equally ominous, is the factory.

*Saved From the Factory*

In an Alger story serialized beginning December, 1892, Ben Bruce determines to leave the home of his mean stepfather. He meets a friend of his who is superintendent of a “factory for the manufacture of leather board.” The superintendent asks the boy how he would like to work there. Ben Bruce, expressing a desire to secure a better education, nonetheless answers: “If the choice lies between working on a farm and working in your factory, I will work for you if I can get the chance.”<sup>9</sup> The starting wage is adequate, and the hero inquires whether he would be preparing himself for “higher” work; the superintendent answers in the affirmative. Just when it looks like they are about to strike a bargain, the dam which provides water power for the factory is blown up, apparently by two discharged workmen (Figure 3). Since the factory must be shut down until the dam is rebuilt, this ends the boy’s hope of employment there. And so, Alger “blows up” this option rather than forsake Ben there. The boy is saved!

Though Alger frequently set his tales in late antebellum America, the factory was, even at that point, an inescapable presence in the northeastern landscape. Such boosters of industrialism as Edward Everett (for whom Alger would run errands as a Harvard freshman in 1848) could proclaim the factory at Lowell, begun in the second decade of the century, the “fulfillment of the American Revolution and a model of republicanism.”<sup>10</sup> But others were not so sanguine. Antebellum travellers to England worried over the poverty and moral debasement that accompanied industrialization and wondered whether they were looking at America’s future and the demise of republican virtue. “The machine unmans the user,” Emerson would write after his 1847 trip abroad.<sup>11</sup> By the late 1830s, the vision of the American factory as a community was increasingly difficult to maintain in light of labor discontent, worker combinations, and emerging analyses of wage slavery.

The rare brick, furniture, or shoe manufactory in Alger stories still involved pre-industrial skilled craft work; mechanization had not appreciably altered the nature of work.<sup>12</sup> At the outset of *Five Hundred Dollars* (serialized beginning 1889), Bert Barton is thrown out of work as a shoe pegger by the introduction of a machine. Though such effects of mechanization of a craft were hardly rare in the 1880s, this was an extremely rare occurrence in Alger’s fiction.

A few Alger heroes begin work life in a factory, but circumstances (e.g., dullness in a trade; malicious intervention by the superintendent’s son) quickly conspire to compel them to look for other work. One scholar notes:

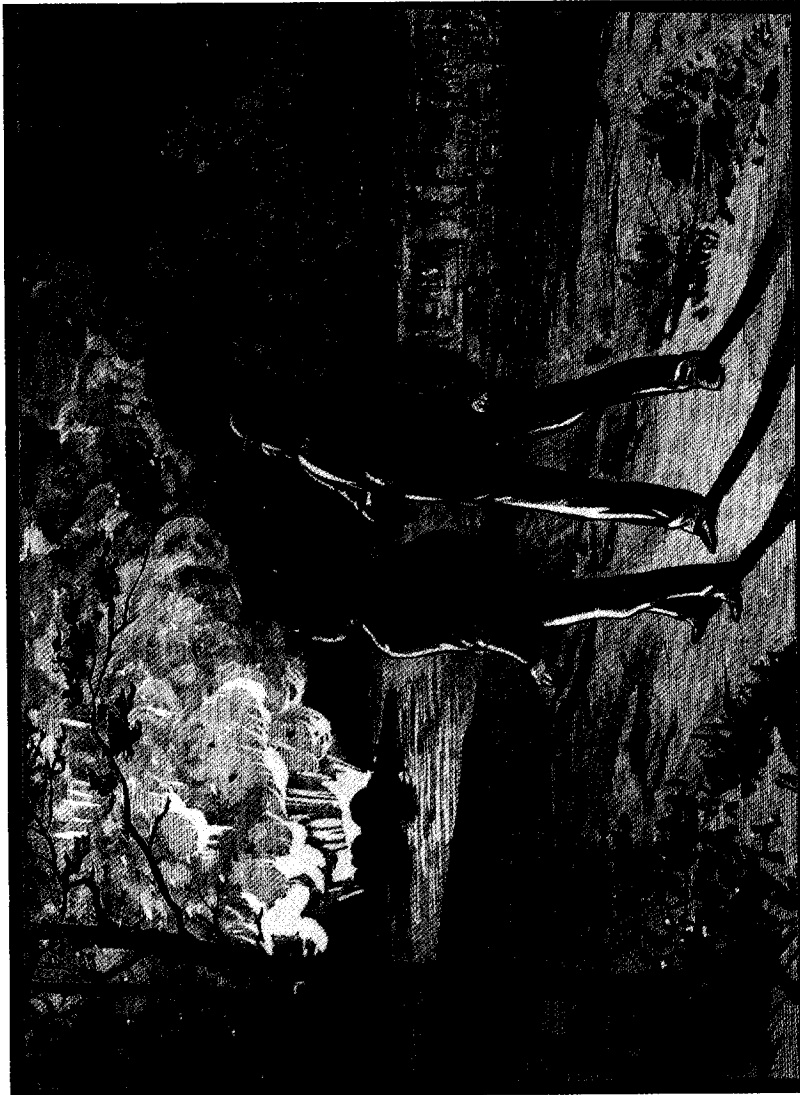


Fig. 3. Arthur Lee Putnam (Alger pseudonym), "Ben Bruce," *The Argosy* 15: 523, (December 10, 1892), front page illustration: "Before Their Astonished Eyes There Rose Into the Air That Which Resembled A Volcanic Eruption." General Research Division, The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Permission is granted.

on the rare occasions when he [Alger] did [start a boy in a factory] he could only think to have the lad fired or laid off at the outset, as if desperate for some contrivance to expel him as quickly as possible into the world where a man could make his mark.<sup>13</sup>

Alger's factory work is virtually never described. Often, the reader has no idea what is made, and is not taken into areas of production. The author exhibits little or no curiosity about this place of work. Robert Rushton, for instance, provides the chief support of his family by working in the factory in Millville. Beyond this, one learns only that the brick factory provided about the only avenue of employment to be had in town, that Robert was able to earn six dollars a week, and that tardiness resulted in a twenty-five cent docking.<sup>14</sup>

Alger boys exit the factory; they do not seek to make their way within it.<sup>15</sup> Heroes are not dependent upon factory work as the sole possible employment unless they confine their search to the local community in which they begin life. In Alger's city, there are other things to do.

When seeking work, the central character will often turn down manual labor or the opportunity to learn a craft or trade (Figure 4). The stinginess of the man to whom the hero would be apprenticed is sometimes adduced as the reason for refusal, or the boy might submit that he does not want to live away from his mother (which he inevitably chooses to do when he leaves for the city). Often, he merely asserts that he doesn't believe he is cut out for certain types of work, or doesn't think he would like it.<sup>16</sup> Alger heroes are clearly destined for another fate.

To what length Alger is willing to go to keep the boy afloat and away from the factory gates! The young hero may join a circus, or even whistle and give bird imitations on the stage for a living. When one nearly penniless boy claims to feel foolish playing the harmonica on stage for money, his companion replies: "it would be more ridiculous *not* playing for money. Whatever talents we possess our Creator meant us to exercise for our benefit and the pleasure of the community."<sup>17</sup>

Alger's young boys not infrequently discover positions that do not pay a living wage, but they walk away. Even if they are hard up, they are never put into the position of having to accept anything that is offered. Something or someone intervenes to obviate the necessity of such a choice. Some choices are simply unacceptable. The factory, and working class jobs more broadly, fall into this category.

Once the boy gets to the city—which is most frequently New York—Alger provides quite a bit of detail about city sights, scenes, architecture, and prices. Some of these novels took the reader on a guided tour of Manhattan sights, with perhaps even an expedition by ferry to Brooklyn. More than one Alger enthusiast has claimed that these books were veritable Baedeker's guides. According to one:





KIT'S FLIGHT FROM THE BLACKSMITH.—See Page 61.

Fig. 4. Horatio Alger, Jr., *The Young Acrobat* (New York: Hurst and Company, n.d.)

You could find out *what* to do, *where* to go, *how* to begin, and *how* to proceed in the city. . . . A young man from the country could brief himself on transportation around the city, the ways to obtain lodging and employment. . . .<sup>18</sup>

However, when Alger's heroes wander the streets in search of work, factories disappear. P.T. Barnum's is there, but not its surroundings (Figure 5). One does not know who occupies factory positions or why, but we know that heroes do not. To remove even the possibility of exchanging one's labor power for a wage in the factory, the factory must become invisible.

One of Alger's Chicago stories, *Luke Walton*, is deposited for copyright the same month and year that Carrie Meeber comes to Chicago in *Sister Carrie* (August, 1889). Luke sees many of the same new downtown sights Carrie does. Yet Dreiser's Carrie, who trudges the streets in search of work, could not avoid passing and viewing the manufacturing establishments on her long walk from home on the west side of the river to the downtown area. Unable to find a position as a shop-girl, she eventually finds a poorly paid, unpleasant position manufacturing shoes. The factory girls she eventually leaves behind have little hope of betterment. Carrie could not help but see men toiling at heavy labor in the streets; poorly clad shop girls who worked so hard and had so little; the pale, ragged creatures in states of mental stupor who walked the streets or held out their hands for change.<sup>19</sup> And yet, when Alger's newsboy walks home to his poor and unfashionable neighborhood, he does not seem to pass any factories or see the ways many people labor. Away from the bustling downtown commercial center, across the Chicago River, there is only the usual Alger drama.

One would hardly realize that Alger inhabited the same universe as Edward Bellamy, who published his extremely popular novel *Looking Backward* in 1888, purporting to solve the most pressing issue of the day—the labor problem. The era was notable for labor organization, strikes and violence, but Alger allows almost no worker combinations or strikes to cross the pages of even his later novels. When one labor uprising is mentioned in *A Debt of Honor*, it is a passing reference by someone remote from the scene of action; the destruction of property noted above in *Ben Bruce* is extremely unusual.

Once jobs in factories, crafts, and trades drop from sight, career and earning trajectories of Alger characters do not mirror options in the economy. All his boys find employment in the white-collar workforce, though less than 20% of all workers are so employed by 1900. Boys are found earning at the high end of the scales for average weekly adult earnings during the period.<sup>20</sup>

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Engels had noted in 1845 that the structure of the city almost conspires to keep the manufacturing establishments and the squalid tenements of the poor out of the view of the untroubled bourgeoisie, lining the streets with tidy shops and concealing what lies behind.<sup>21</sup> Alger did see the tenements, and saw those left unemployed by panics and depressions; he even condemned those who did not see poverty or try to assist the worthy among the poor. But he did not see any pattern to poverty and unemployment among males that did not stem from character flaws. It is clear that, at least so far as concerns the factory, Alger's boys share the privileged gaze of the bourgeoisie.

#### *Factories and Failure*

This "blindness" is part of a pattern in Alger to go to great lengths to rescue heroes from the prospect of factory labor. Factory labor is something to be avoided or escaped. In part, this reflects the fact that Alger was the product of literary traditions which preceded realism. Though his most popular works tended to feature neglected street urchins of New York, he may well have believed some things were not the fit subject of discussion. William Dean Howells' literary realism had to do battle with an earlier faith; "in the strife-torn, graft-ridden years of the late Nineteenth Century, industrial society had understandably seemed to literary men an enemy, not a subject."<sup>22</sup> The author E.C. Stedman, whom Alger greatly admired, expressed a wish to lift readers above the sordid details of contemporary life. Alger admired Howells, but his own literary work reflected more the views of the *Christian Union*:

Realism...[seemed bent on] crowding the world of fiction with commonplace people, whom one could positively avoid coming into contact with in real life; people without native sweetness or strength, without acquired culture or accomplishments, without the touch of the ideal which makes the commonplace significant and worthy of study.<sup>23</sup>

Alger's heroes were always those exceptional boys, regardless of the economic circumstances in which they found themselves. The commonplace children were there, but not at center stage.

Alger did not think the factory offered a very good route of mobility. It did not nurture aspiration. Alger spent his youth in Marlboro, Massachusetts, which he remembered as engaging in shoe manufacturing. "Though diversified, the local economy was not immune to the cyclical fluctuations which plagued the shoe industry at large." Nearby towns, more dependent upon manufacture than Marlboro, suffered frequent cycles of boom and bust. When forced to shut down temporarily in a glutted market, an Alger shoemaker comments:

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That's the worst of the shoe trade. It isn't steady. When it's good everybody rushes into it, and the market soon gets overstocked. Then there's no work for weeks. If a man manages to save up a little money in good times, he has to spend it then. . . .<sup>24</sup>

Alger's "experience" with manufacturing was that it did not provide a reliable income. Thus, heroes sought to escape business cycle fluctuations and discover steady work with reliable and rising wages. Boys sought careers at work.

Rosy depictions of factory opportunities were repeated throughout the century by industrialists and their supporters. They were even found in one advice manual Alger recommended to a young friend. Such depictions also provoked this 1889 response:

If you tell a single concrete workman on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad that he may yet be president of the company, it is not demonstrable that you have told him what is not true, although it is within bounds to say that he is far more likely to be killed by a stroke of lightning.<sup>25</sup>

Alger seems to realize there is something in this position. He was not as positive as some of his contemporaries and at least a few later historians about opportunities in the nineteenth century factory. "We find that *many of our most conspicuous public men* have commenced their careers as newsboys," Alger was fond of repeating.<sup>26</sup> He did not say 'factory hands'.

The bulk of evidence unturned by historians and sociologists would seem to be on his side. Scholars have tended to find that the route from shop hand to supervisor was neither quick nor terribly likely. There might be some upward mobility through positions, but downward mobility was perhaps as likely, and lateral movement from department to department was also common. Patronage was instrumental to advancement. A pioneer among these studies, examining mobility in Newburyport, Massachusetts argues:

Most of the social gains registered by laborers and their sons during these years were decidedly modest—a move one notch up the occupational scale, the acquisition of a small amount of property. Yet *in their eyes* these accomplishments must have loomed large.<sup>27</sup>

Aside from the mobility issue, there were other reasons to bypass the factory. A significant element in Alger's elimination of this option lies in his distrust of capitalists. The term itself tends to connote for him selfish men who are unconcerned with the interests of their workers and who would readily exploit their dependence to depress their wages. They tend to worship money and ignore community. Capitalists lack respect for the exchange of equivalents, failing to pay labor at its value (whatever this means—Alger does not much trouble himself with the basis of wages or profits, but he believes workers deserve a living wage).

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They could choose to behave differently, but they have taken money out of proper perspective. Individuals who put money before people are anything but successes in Alger's universe, and he frequently arranges some sort of economic justice for them.

It is essential to Alger's formula for advancement that character be noticed. Character is the most valuable asset that the hero brings to the marketplace; its recognition becomes the means by which the boy rises. The factory system was surely not one to illustrate Alger's principle that, by application, hard work, cheerfulness, loyalty to one's employer, and honesty, any boy can hope to be noticed for his endeavors and advance. In the emerging industrial order, there was less opportunity for the individual to engage in personal contact with a boss, impress him, or employ his education or wits in new and different tasks. The factory wage labor system was impersonal, and offered workers limited scope within which to affect their destinies. The equivalents in market exchange were hides, not character.

It was not a world in which community of interest between employer and employee would endure. The boss who notices and rewards the trusted employee and who invites him home to dinner bridges the gap between social classes—in effect, negates the meaning of class. The only class worthy of mention is an aristocracy of character.

Factory labor was not likely to take a street-hardened hero without advantages and uplift him, exposing him to a better class of people who would encourage him to better himself. Without the human contact and example of men of good character, the factory would not nurture character or virtue. Even if indifferent workers might comply with factory discipline in order to keep their jobs, the work environment did not help make them men—it did not improve them, and hardened companions might even lead them astray. Those with power may well stand to affect the identity and morals of those over whom they exercise control. If capitalists and their factory agents do not stand for virtue, what will become of their employees?

Self-improvement was a moral imperative. Certain occupations were less desirable because they did not allow the youth to grow and improve by using his mind:

Idealess occupations, associates, and books should be avoided, since they are not friendly to intelligent manhood and womanhood. Ideas make the wise man; the want of them the fool.<sup>28</sup>

In the Harvard Unitarian tradition, "Man had both a mind (that is, a spirit) and a body, but his destiny clearly lay in developing the power of the former."<sup>29</sup> Physical labor, while honorable, might not provide the opportunities necessary to development. Even if crafts or trades offered

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the prospect of steady work, there was perhaps inadequate opportunity for self-improvement; the case is similar to that of the factory.

Distaste for such labor was also linked to issues of power. The laborer tended to be subject to the close control of others and had little discretion. The Alger hero manages to find work in which he retains a great deal of control over his bodily movements and tasks, and in which mental and manual labor are not separated. Often, the employer sends the boy off as his agent in some business matter; the boy is highly independent and may even define the employer's interest in some cases.

Alger's guidance, however unwitting, is largely geared to escaping proletarianization. The successful attain middle class occupations and comforts while *avoiding* manufacturing establishment, crafts, and trades. Alger does not place his faith in opportunity in the growing productive sector, but with sectors engaged in the distribution and exchange of the new wealth of a capitalist economy. Merchandising, the growing trade sector, finance, banking, and real estate tend to provide the routes into middle class comforts for Alger's heroes.

Stories frequently end when the boy escapes economic marginalization. Beyond a "competence" and beyond comfort, money allowed one to help others. Success was measured by preservation and development of character, by escape from privations and insecurity, and by avoidance of the factory.

If a boy cultivates character and remembers duties and obligations, he is likely to improve his lot. Two benevolent merchants in New York who started out poor state the success formula and the nature of the aspirations particularly well:

Most of the men in this city who have succeeded in business or in the professions started as poor boys. . . . There are the same chances now that there always were. Serve your employer well, learn business as rapidly as possible, don't fall into bad habits, and you'll get on.<sup>30</sup>

### Conclusion

Failure in Alger is linked with a transition from youth to adulthood without establishing secure, stable employment with opportunities for incremental advancement of one's wage. Failures continue not to know from whence their next meals come. Failures do not establish careers. Failures do not develop the personal relationship with employers that the hero does; they do not merit the attention of benefactors. Unconnected and alone, they are treated impersonally as labor. Those who do not succeed are buffeted about by the vicissitudes of the business cycle—cut adrift in times of depression without the means to fend for themselves. They have nothing to fall back on, and lack skills in high demand. Failures do not have bank accounts, and they do not own property. This

certainly appears to describe the fate of those being incorporated into the industrial wage labor force.

It is against twin spectres of economic marginalization and proletarianization that economic success is defined. Both scenarios threaten the moral order. The Alger story takes a boy who has been cut adrift from the traditional economy and thus economically marginalized—and inserts him into the new economic world—bypassing the mines and factories.

The persisting invocation of the Alger story in American popular culture owes something to the continuing presence of outcomes and work environments to be avoided in an industrialized and deindustrializing economy. Employment instability, dead-end jobs, low wages, impersonalized work environments, and routinized activity are still present. A comforting measure of success lies in the fate one has eluded. In a world increasingly economically interdependent, the dream of independence and self-reliance—and of desirable, fulfilling work—may be all the more seductive.

## Notes

"Broadway & Fulton" illustration from the book *Adventures in America, 1857-1900: A Pictorial Record of Harper's Weekly* by John Kouwenhoven. Copyright © 1938 by Harper & Brothers. By arrangement with HarperCollinsPublishers.

<sup>1</sup>John Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965) was a pioneer in this revision. Gary Scharnhorst, *Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) offers the most thorough rereading of Alger's economic and moral universe. See also Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America 1850-1920* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978); R. Richard Wohl, "The 'Rags to Riches Story': An Episode of Secular Idealism," *Class, Status, and Power*, eds. Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (New York: The Free P, 2nd ed., 1966) 501-506; and Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (New York: Verso, 1987) for other revisions of the economic and moral universe of Alger.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years' Work Among Them* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872); reprinted by National Association of Social Workers, 27.

<sup>3</sup>Brace, 300-301. Brace wrote of their fourteen to eighteen year old constituency: "...a more difficult class than these to manage, no philanthropic mortal ever came in contact with. The most had a constitutional objection to work; they had learned to do nothing well, and therefore got but little wages anywhere..." (307; 303-315).

<sup>4</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Tattered Tom* (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates & Co., n.d., copyright Horatio Alger, Jr., 1899) 282.

<sup>5</sup>Brace 29.

<sup>6</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Rufus and Rose* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1870) 72.

<sup>7</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Rough and Ready* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1869) 97.



<sup>8</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Helen Ford* (Boston: A.K. Loring, 1866). Both quotes are from p. 255.

<sup>9</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Ben Bruce* (New York: A.L. Burt, 1901) 9-11. The first serialization of this story began in *The Argosy* 15 (1892) and continued into 1893.

<sup>10</sup>John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976) 86.

<sup>11</sup>Kasson, chapters 2-3. Ralph Waldo Emerson quoted in Kasson 127.

<sup>12</sup>On the nonmechanized nature of this work see Gary Scharnhorst, *Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 124-25.

<sup>13</sup>Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America 1850-1920* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978) 39.

<sup>14</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Brave and Bold* (New York: A.L. Burt, n.d.) 7, 10-11, 23 and passim.

<sup>15</sup>The central character in Alger's *Herbert Carter's Legacy* ends by entering the manufacturing establishment of his benefactor as an office clerk.

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, the conversation between the blacksmith, Mr. Forge, and Alger's central character in *Tom Turner's Legacy* (NY: Hurst & Company, copyright 1902 A.L. Burt) 176-177, in which the hero is rather coy about turning down the opportunity to learn a trade. See also Horatio Alger, Jr., *Dean Dunham*, where the hero turns down a chance to be a shoemaker, and *Wait and Win*. The kinds of work the hero avoids also include going to sea and farming.

<sup>17</sup>Alger, *Dean Dunham* (Leyden, MA: Aeonian Press, 1975) 156. See also Alger's *A Rolling Stone* (Leyden, MA: Aeonian P, 1975).

<sup>18</sup>Dick shows Frank Whitney the sights for several days, eight chapters, and nearly 100 pages in a late Loring printing of *Ragged Dick*. In his introduction to Alger's *A Rolling Stone*, ii, Ralph D. Gardner says: "Juiciest morsels of any Alger chronicle include Baedeker-like descriptions of Old New York streets and landmarks." See also Harold Harvey, "Alger's New York: A Story For Old Boys," *New York Tribune* January 28, 1917: header, section 5.3: "In his stories of newsboy life he has preserved New York of the late fifties with the descriptive detail of a Baedeker." Quote is from Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 244.

<sup>19</sup>Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Modern Library, 1917) 160 and passim.

<sup>20</sup>Looking at average daily wages, which are available for 1860-1880 only in this statistical series, we would conclude that the twenty year range of a week's earnings—if someone worked full-time every day for six days per week—would be as follows: \$6.54-6.96 for all nonfarm employees; \$6.18-7.92 for laborers; and \$9.72-\$13.56 for the category of skilled laborers, which includes blacksmiths, carpenters, engineers, painters and machinists. *Historical Statistics of the United States from Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, Bicentennial Edition), Series D728-34 and 735-38.

<sup>21</sup>Friedrich Engels, writing of Manchester in 1845, but noting that the plan tends to be common to all major cities, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973) 85-86.

<sup>22</sup>Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959) 16.

<sup>23</sup>Hamilton Wright Mabie, critic for the *Christian Union*, quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America* (NY: Hill & Wang, 1982) 182. Alger's letter to E.C. Stedman, dated November 29, 1875, offers an assessment of the latter's

gifts. This letter is at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. On Howells, see, for instance, an Edward Stratemeyer-completed Alger, *The Young Book Agent*.

<sup>24</sup>Gary Scharnhorst with Jack Bales, *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985) 13. Horatio Alger, Jr., *Bound to Rise* (Chicago: M.A. Donohue & Co., n.d.) 155.

<sup>25</sup>For a late nineteenth century view of the factory as a route of advancement, see William Makepeace Thayer, *Success and Its Achievers* (Boston: A.M. Thayer, Publishers, 1891; Boston: James H. Earle, 1896), especially 172-173 in the later edition. For Alger's gift of this work to Irving Blake, see letter of December 18, 1896 and subsequent mention in the collection of the Huntington Library. Richard T. Ely quoted in R. Richard Wohl, "The Rags to Riches Story: An Episode of Secular Idealism," 504.

<sup>26</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Rufus and Rose* viii, italics in original. See Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) for a discussion of real opportunities for mobility in the factories of Paterson, New Jersey from 1830 to 1880.

<sup>27</sup>Tamara K. Hareven, *Family Time & Industrial Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 259 and Chapter 10. The Newburyport study is Stephan Thernstrom's *Poverty and Progress* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1964) 164-165.

<sup>28</sup>Thayer, 1896 edition, 380.

<sup>29</sup>Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1970) 42. Alger was graduated from Harvard College in 1852 and the Divinity School on the eve of the Civil War.

<sup>30</sup>Horatio Alger, Jr., *Tom Turner's Legacy* 230.

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