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Founded on compromise: Australian girls' family stories, 1894-1982

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FOUNDED ON COMPROMISE - AUSTRALIAN GIRLS' FAMILY STORIES
1894 - 1982

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

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ABSTRACT

On 21st September, 1894, Ethel Turner received her first bound copy of *Seven Little Australians*, "I think it was the very happiest minute of my life" she wrote in her diary. This first novel by a young author went on to become a famous and important work of Australian literature. On its publication, Ethel Turner became a national figure and *Seven Little Australians*, although meant for children, was read by everybody - from the Governor of New South Wales and the author Mark Twain - to girls and boys who later, as adults, wrote of the novel's impact on their perception of Australia.

*Seven Little Australians* marks the beginning of the family story in Australia, and provides a focus for my study of the genre. Variously known as domestic fiction, or by the blanket term "girls' literature", family stories originated in England in the 1850's as fiction meant specifically for girls. It is this continuing anticipation by writers and publishers of a mostly feminine readership that shapes my examination of Australian family stories from 1894 to 1982.

This thesis aims to construct an historical framework for the Australian family story and, from
this, to trace interconnections between novels written over a span of almost one hundred years. The thesis is divided into two major sections; the "Turner era" 1894 to 1942, and the "moderns" 1943 to 1982. In Chapter One, I look back to the origin of the girls' family story in England and America, and examine the major features of the genre. In the second half of this Chapter, I look briefly at Australian children's fiction published prior to 1894 and conclude with a survey of contemporary critical responses to Australian girls' fiction. As the dominant genre in Australian children's fiction, many authors have written family stories. In this thesis I closely examine only eight authors who, as distinguished writers, have in some way influenced the nature of the family story in Australia. In Chapters Two to Six, the principal writers of the Turner era: Ethel Turner, Louise Mack, Lilian Turner and Mary Grant Bruce, are considered against a background of a developing national consciousness and the growth of a national literature. Overseas paradigms outlined in Chapter One, are compared to Australian literary portraits of girls, to distinguish the Australian family story from foreign forebears, but also to understand how our writers viewed the prospects for girls and women in a new society.

Chapter Seven is a bridge between the two major historical periods, examining the years that saw the
decline in popularity of the Turner era writers, and the rise of a group of writers who gave new impetus to the genre. In Chapter Eight, novels by Eleanor Spence, Joan Phipson, and Mavis Thorpe Clark are considered as evidence of changes in the pattern of the Australian family story that distinguishes the Turner era from the modern period. In Chapter Nine, I look at modern attempts to use an older style of heroine in novels by Spence, Clark and Hesba Brinsmead. Chapter Ten links the patterns of Phipson's and Spence's long careers as children's writers to the critical reception of children's fiction, as well as emphasising these two authors' continuing preoccupations and their effect on the nature of the family story. Throughout the thesis I test my contention that the predominant pattern of family stories emanates from an author's desire to confront and question the changes expected from girls as they pass from adolescence to womanhood - a desire that lends complexity to a genre of children's fiction that has been sometimes undervalued because it is often misunderstood.
INTRODUCTION

Women's fiction reflects an experience radically different from men's because our drive towards growth as persons is thwarted by our society's prescriptions concerning gender. Whether women authors are conscious of this feminism or force profemina in their novels or not, or whether they are overtly concerned with being and writing about women, the tension between what Apollo intends and Daphne is willing to accept, between forces demanding our submissions and our rebellious assertions of personhood, characterize far too much of our fiction to be incidental.1

...fiction can articulate not just what is imposed as a social and intellectual system, but the lived experience of it and the conflicts within it; it includes the frustrations and distortions, the failures and aspirations. Thus a novel can at once resonate with the values of liberal ideology and patriarchal culture and be simultaneously critical of them.2
In this study of Australian girls' family stories, the novels of Ethel Turner represent both a focus and a beginning. When the first Australian children's book to feature a girl heroine, *Seven Little Australians*, was published in 1894 it formed another link in a lengthy tradition of domestic fiction that had become well established during the nineteenth century in England and North America. The widely read, and by 1894, classic works of Charlotte Yonge, Louisa Alcott and Susan Coolidge as well as a mass of novels by minor writers constituted a literary tradition which Turner, using a major girl character, was compelled to acknowledge. In *Seven Little Australians* however, Turner also had the opportunity to test the paradigms of girls' fiction against her Australian experience. North American authors, Louisa Alcott and Susan Coolidge, had made much of the experience of inhabiting a new country in regard to the special qualities of their heroines. Turner, writing almost three decades after the publication of *Little Women* (1868), in a country whose vastness and complexity was as yet little understood, its people suffering from economic depression and at the same time excited by the approach of Federation, found new possibilities and new freedoms for her heroine. Turner left her mark very firmly imprinted in that productive literary decade. However much critics may argue as to the principal features and
themes of the 1890's writers and their importance to Australian writing generally, for Australian children's literature, the 1890's was a watershed.

After *Seven Little Australians*, Australian children's literature took many paths, but this study will look at the literature written with girl readers as its principal audience. The term "girls' literature" has to be qualified in this way as indeed does the term "boys' literature", because the distinction between the two is, and always has been, arbitrary, and members of either sex are likely to be found reading books which were apparently intended for the other. No quantitative survey of audience has to be made to determine whether a book will be read more by girls than boys. In regard to the earlier books studied in this dissertation, critics, publishers and the authors themselves appear quite sure of the principal audience. *Seven Little Australians* with its mix of characters, its appeal to girls, boys and adults, was nevertheless firmly recognised as part of domestic fiction and compared to *Little Women* as a book for girls.

In scope and treatment the book is a little above children, a little below most grown-ups, and it will hardly be acceptable to boys at any age; but to girls between the lights, fluttering a new and timorous soul at the meeting of the brook and the river, and a brief and tremulous gown at the meeting of the calf and ankle, 'Seven Little Australians' should prove at once an oracle and an ecstasy. And when Miss Turner, like Miss Alcott,
weds her little women, one hopes to be able to congratulate her upon the display of a creative strength and originality of which now we have only the promise.3

By 1915 the Bulletin saw Turner's audience as "flappers", still, presumably, girls at the meeting of "brook and river", but whose skirts no longer "fluttered at the ankle"!4 The Bulletin however does not seem to have been a good judge of the age of Turner's audience. Her main readers appear to have been young girls from twelve to sixteen years of age and the use of her books as school prizes bears this out.5 Turner's first heroine, Judy Woolcot, was thirteen; Judy's eldest sister Meg was sixteen, and it is reasonable to assume that heroines' ages corresponded somewhat with the likely age of her anticipated reader. Similarly, the other early writers studied here, Lilian Turner, Louise Mack and Mary Grant Bruce, wrote mainly for adolescent girls.

This study is based on two major historical divisions; the early writers, 1894 to 1942, and contemporary writers, 1943 to the present day. It is unusual for developments in literature to fall into neat divisions. If it often seems they do, it is because literary historians find it easier to deal with units rather than with the grey and hazy times that mark the end of many literary movements. For the first division in this study, the novels of the two most
popular and influential authors mark the boundaries of the early period. Ethel Turner's last book, Judy and Punch, was published in 1928. Mary Grant Bruce continued to write and publish until 1942. Louise Mack's last Teens sequel, Teens Triumphant, was published in 1933 and Lilian Turner's Two Take the Road was published in 1931. The thirties and forties represent a gradual working out of the impetus Turner and Mack, and later Bruce, brought to the girls' family story in Australia. Although in these two decades there were a large number of authors writing specifically for girls, none of them emerged as major writers and certainly little was attempted that was particularly new or divergent within the genre.

The forties and early fifties can be seen as an irregular line marking the division between the rise of the girls' family story in Australia and its subsequent decline, and the establishment in the fifties of a group of distinguished writers who gave new impetus to the genre and changed the nature of girls' books in certain important ways. Joan Phipson's Good Luck to the Rider was published in 1953, Eleanor Spence's first book Patterson's Track in 1958, Hesba Brinsmead's Pastures of the Blue Crane in 1964. Mavis Thorpe Clark spans the two divisions, publishing her best known book, The Min Min, in 1966 in a writing career that began in 1930 with Hatherly's First Fifteen, a boys'
school story. All four of these authors are still publishing today, and so in spite of beginning their careers thirty years ago, qualify for the title of contemporary writers. A feature of the contemporary period is the lessening of the distinction between girls' and boys' books. However, although critics and publishers no longer emphasize a book's possible audience, it is apparent that these modern authors wrote many of their books with girl readers in mind. It is an unfortunate truism that whereas it is thought acceptable for girls to read books featuring a major boy character, boys are considered less likely to respond to a book featuring a major girl character. This unwritten law has ensured that the genre of the girls' family story is maintained with or without open acknowledgement.

It is not the intention in this dissertation to cover all Australian girls' fiction, (that is, any writing other than novels) nor to survey all the authors who have written girls' books. Many Australian authors have written for girls, but the eight writers selected for study have each made a special contribution to the Australian girls' story. Each of the authors has an unmistakable style, and their heroines range in character from reckless to retiring, but if all eight were gathered together in E.M. Forster's circular room, they would find nothing
surprising in each other's books. The repetition of certain patterns in their novels supports the contention that the genre of Australian girls' family stories is sustained by a single motivating force that overrides any other differences between the authors. Simply stated, this broad common element, which also depends for its existence on the sex of the author, is a searching out of a role for girls and women in Australia. At the root of this search is a view of Australia as a place where girls have the opportunity to strike out in new directions, to slough off the burden of what Turner describes as "the shadow of long years' sorrowful history". Although this may appear to be a familiar theme in Australian literature - the idea of the new land holding out promise for those who are willing to strive - there are important differences in the way it is used in girls' fiction. Where the heroes of the early Australian adventure stories hack a perilous existence from a hostile and often frightening environment, or in Ivan Southall's modern tales of boys clawing their way to manhood against the vicissitudes of a changeable land, the fight of the heroines of girls' fiction is not with the land. Their battle is with those who stand in the way of a natural and uninhibited response to the opportunities and freedoms Australia appears to offer. There is little confrontation between the heroines and Australianness; rather these rebels and the more modern sensitive
heroine, are shown to have a special empathy with their environment. Together they are being tidied-up: the girls made to tie their hair neatly, to become gentlewomen; the timeless continent to reflect European standards of order and predictability. The irony of this new-found girlhood freedom is that authors do not match it with a similar view of adult life. What talented and outgoing girls will do with their lives is a central theme in most of the novels of Ethel and Lilian Turner, Louise Mack, Eleanor Spence, Hesba Brinsmead and Mavis Thorpe Clark. In Mary Grant Bruce's novels, it hovers around the fences of her literary utopias, waiting for a gate to be left open.

The theory supporting this view of Australian girls' literature is derived from a consideration of the development of the girls' family story as a literary genre. In Australian children's literature, the term 'girls' fiction' refers mostly to family stories. Cadogan and Craig in their study of British girls' fiction distinguish family stories from school stories, pony stories, career novels, girl guide stories and girl detective books - and in Australia there have been home-grown examples of all these categories.7 Louise Mack's Teens (1897) is a very early example of the Australian school story, but the indigenous species rarely was distinct from family stories, and never matched the popularity of the
British. It has been family stories from their beginnings with *Seven Little Australians*, that have constituted the major tradition of girls' literature in Australia. As a consequence, this study will examine the patterns and relationships established in overseas girls' family stories prior to *Seven Little Australians* with regard to their role as foundations for Australian girls' literature. These patterns and relationships, in particular the differences between American and British authors, provide some answers as to why girl characters play so small a part in Australian children's literature up until 1894. The type of book available to Australian children prior to *Seven Little Australians* is outlined in order to explore the claim that *Seven Little Australians* was the first children's book to portray Australian life convincingly. The conclusions drawn from this are examined in the light of critical responses to Australian children's literature, with an emphasis on the attention paid to girls' books.

It is not the intention of this dissertation to make any definitive statements about the position of girls in Australian society, past or present. Rather it is intended that those who have some historical or sociological understanding of Australia will find this literary study a useful contribution to the building-up of a comprehensive historical/sociological perspective.
on Australian girls and women. Great problems exist in trying to generalise about the situation of Australian girls and women because of a lack of written material and the variations of experience and outlook according to class, education and income. The authors studied here are middle-class and well-educated and write for (and about) children from similar backgrounds. What secondary material is available has been used to provide a commentary on the findings from the texts. What can be said, is that against expectations, girls' literature, particularly the earlier novels, was in the vanguard of Australian literature. Ethel Turner and Louise Mack anticipated the more outspoken novels about Australian girlhood by Miles Franklin and Henry Handel Richardson, and painted a picture of urban Australia that, for whatever reason, was somewhat overlooked in adult novels. Against a background of patterns in adult fiction, the development of feminism and the changing face of Australia, and women's place in that change, writers of girls' family stories have endeavoured, and still endeavour, to make sense of a world where girls have reason to regret, or even fear, the transition from child to woman.
"I'll bring you - let me see; ever read Little Women?"
No, Mabel had never read it - that dearest, brightest of all dear girl books.
"Why, then, I suppose you've never read Little Women Wedded nor Little Men?"
"No; I haven't read any of them. Are they all the same? I do love a lot of books about the same people. I never can get a book big enough, can you?..."

It was all reading and eating. Toffee and Little Women and A Feast of Good Things, till the daylight faded, and a street lamp shone in on the figures of the two who were lying in such comfortable attitudes, munching very slowly, and reading very quickly.
(Louise Mack, Teens 1897)
Domestic fiction, or family stories, were generally written for girls as a sort of transition literature between nursery rhymes and fairy stories on the one hand and adult novels on the other. The most famous early examples were Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and Louisa Alcott's *Little Women* (1868). Although these two books are quite different in regard to content and attitude, representing both the variations in their authors' experience as well as a difference between a British and American outlook, they do share a certain pattern of structure, plot and incident, a pattern taken up by, and repeated in almost all nineteenth century girls' domestic fiction. Generally there is a fairly large family of children whose differing characters and tastes provoke most of the event and action in the novels. One of the parents is usually away or dead - quite often the mother - and this contributes to the major interest in the story because of the pressures on the eldest children, inevitably girls, to take up the parental role. This pressure conflicts with the desires of the heroine to live an independent life. The feature of these books is the heroine who is invariably a 'tomboy'.

According to the dictionary, a 'tomboy' is a rude, bold, romping, boyish girl - to readers of girls'
fiction a tomboy was a character whose vicissitudes spiced the tales of family life, a Joan of Arc who battled against the draconian laws of domesticity. The first of these characters to achieve popular success was Ethelred May, the fifteen-year-old heroine of Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*. Ethelred's introduction formed the foundation of all tomboy heroines who followed.

'Miss Winter, are you busy? Do you want this afternoon? Can you take a good long walk?'

'Ethel, my dear, how often have I told you of your impetuosity - you have forgotten.'

'Very well' - with an impatient twist - 'I beg your pardon. Good morning, Miss Winter,' said a thin, lank, angular, sallow girl, just fifteen, trembling from head to foot with restrained eagerness, as she tried to curb her tone into the requisite civility.1

Poor Ethelred! Twelve years later, a similar type of introduction ushered in the most famous heroine of children's literature, Jo March.

'Jo does use such slang words!' observed Amy, with a reproving look at the long figure stretched on the rug. Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle. (*Little Women*)

Ethelred and Jo are from the same mould - eager, impatient, tall, thin, clever and imaginative.

Ethelred wants to earn money from writing so as to build a church in the poor district of Cocksmoor; Jo, somewhat more self-interested, wants to write to become rich and famous and to keep her family in the
circumstances she feels they deserve.

She had heard in books, of girls writing poetry, romance, history--gaining fifties and hundreds. Could not some of the myriads of fancies floating in her mind thus be made available? She would compose, publish, earn money - some day call papa, show him her hoard, beg him to take it, and, never owning whence it came, raise the building. Spire and chancel, pinnacle and buttress rose before her eyes... (The Daisy Chain)

'I want to do something splendid before I go into my castle - something heroic or wonderful, that won't be forgotten after I'm dead. I don't know what, but I'm on the watch for it, and mean to astonish you all some day. I think I shall write books, and get rich and famous; that would suit me, so that is my favourite dream.' (Little Women)

Jo and Ethelred together with countless hybrids were the focus of a type of girls' book that was not matched in popularity until the girls' school story of the 1920's. It is not too much to claim that Little Women has been the most popular children's book ever written.

Cadogan and Craig point out that initially the concept of books written especially for girls was a positive step in both children's literature and in society, "since it marked a recognition of the particular nature and interests of young girls".2 Unlike most children's literature, the main focus in girls' books is on the heroine, a character whose actions and thoughts are rarely given prominence in children's books of a more general type, and never in books written for boys. As role models, these characters offered girls something more than they were
offered by society or in other children's books. This featuring of a heroine is singularly important, regardless of the 'quality' of the book.

The adult eye is not necessarily a perfect instrument for discerning certain sorts of values. Elements...may be so obviously rubbishy that one is tempted to dismiss the whole product as rubbish. But among those elements there may be something new and strange to which one is not accustomed, and which one may not be able to assimilate oneself, as an adult, because of the sheer awfulness of the rest of the stuff; but the innocence - I suppose there is no other word - of the child's eye can take or leave in a way that I feel an adult cannot, and can acquire valuable stimuli from things which appear otherwise overgrown with a mass of weeds and nonsense.3

Northrop Frye makes the comment that,

The child should not 'believe' the story he is told; he should not disbelieve it either, but send out imaginative roots into that mysterious world between the 'is' and the 'is not' which is where his own ultimate freedom lies.4

Books such as The Daisy Chain and Little Women must have fostered "imaginative roots" at a time when there was a very narrowly defined concept of a woman's sphere. Heroines like Jo March and Ethelred May are remarkable creations with unusual ambitions within the social context in which their authors wrote. Virginia Woolf's poignantly funny account of the mountains of literature defining 'women'5 had its counterpart in the mid-nineteenth century when the issue of the compass of women's role was much to the fore,

...the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,- and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their
claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise: she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation.

However, without exception, heroines of domestic fiction initially defied in some way stereotypical pictures of girls present in other fiction and, by extension, present in society,

Before girls are old enough to go to school they are familiar with Polly Flinders, who is whipped for spoiling her nice, new, feminine clothes, with the other Polly who is encouraged endlessly to put the kettle on and take it off again; they learn that Miss Muffett has an irrational fear of spiders, and see how little girls who are kissed and reduced to tears by offensive Georgie-Porgie lack the courage to chase him off, and have to wait until the 'boys' come out to rescue them. Popular fiction over the last hundred years has drawn heavily on images which are extensions from these, representing girls essentially as passive, domesticated, brainless and decorative. Fortunately it has often been thrown off course by authors whose own experience, integrity, or sheer literary ability, has supervened.

The protagonists of novels generally do seem to be characters who regard themselves as somewhat removed from common experience or understanding, therefore it is not so remarkable that writers of girls' fiction chose rebels as their heroines. In creating these characters however, they had little to draw on from other literature. As Joanna Russ has pointed out, "Authors do not make their plots up out of thin air", and the creation of the fictional tomboy seems to have occurred because of a commitment to portraying creative
and ambitious girls, together with a dearth of suitable female literary paradigms.

One of the things that handicaps women writers in our - and every other - culture is that there are so very few stories in which women can figure as protagonists.8

There was one major English novel which sympathetically chronicled the struggle of a rebellious young girl to establish her independence and individuality in the face of adversity, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*(1847), but there is evidence to suggest that the image of girlhood in this book was regarded as subversive.

Kathleen Tillotson notes,

> There are abundant examples from life...of prohibitions to daughters, who might not read the third volume of *The Mill on the Floss*, or any of *Jane Eyre*, until marriage or middle-age, whichever came first.9

To overcome the sexual precocity, or at least moral confusion suggested in literary portraits of rebellious girls, authors of girls' fiction labelled the assertiveness of their heroines as 'boyish'. Whilst not women, heroines could live out their independent and outgoing tendencies as surrogate boys. Jo March constantly states her wish to be a boy, as it is in the life of boys that she sees the type of independence she craves. In this way these authors fashioned a literary paradigm out of potentially explosive elements, the rebellious girl whose non-conformity formed the foundations of her strengths and virtues. By encompassing the heroine's actions and motives in
borrowed behaviour, the **accepted** pattern of behaviour in girls and women seemed not to be threatened. By the late nineteenth century when Ethel Turner wrote *Seven Little Australians*, this literary figure was so well established that Judy Woolcot's character was not remarked on as being boyish.

This 'borrowed behaviour' however, is a loan to be relinquished in adulthood. Difficulties arise when the heroine is on the threshold of 'young womanhood'. The creation of the tomboy suggested some dissatisfaction with society by writers of girls' literature. Implicit in Northrop Frye's statement that, "There is a strangely conservative element at the core of realism, an acceptance of society in its present structure", is the idea or notion that romanticism or fantasy provides room for the less satisfied.10 The tomboy is an image of the possibilities of change, only of 'possibilities' because the genre in which she exists is restrained by the limits of its intention to reflect contemporary family life. In achieving a resolution, the author was faced by the crowding constraints of this supposed reflection of 'reality'. The strong suggestion that the tomboy was an embodiment of the author's most deeply held ambitions and desires set up an unresolvable conflict between romance and reality. This is the central paradox of girls' fiction. Authors created talented, exceptional heroines, then 'killed
them off' prior to the conclusion. Both Alcott and Yonge never married and were very successful professional writers, but the prospect of a career for their heroines was always secondary to family life. Defiance of the stereotype only went so far, and once a girl was fifteen or sixteen, the author invariably attempted to modify her heroine's behaviour to suit standards of the time. Contingent on the theme of a girl seeking some measure of independence, was a tendency to resolve the conflicts that inevitably arose through some compromise whereby the heroine appeared to accept the limits of her situation. This pattern of compromise is the hallmark of domestic fiction for girls.

The apparent tidiness of this plot - the tamed rebel - has attracted much adverse critical attention which sees in these books an attempt to instruct girls to conform. Certainly the authors of these books meant them to influence girls. David Walker suggests that popular literature reflects "the values and assumptions of the wider society". In the case of children's literature, popular books do more than this, they help to mould those values and assumptions. Rosemary Auchmuty points out that,

juvenile literature...destined for a more impressionable audience than adult literature, has often taken on the shamelessly didactic role of imparting and reinforcing certain ideals and roles in the disguise of entertainment.
The expectation has always been that children's books should both teach and entertain. At different times, the proportion of amusement to didacticism has varied to suit public expectations, but a basic aim to encourage children to react in certain ways is present in juvenile literature. F.J. Harvey Darton recognised this duality as a major feature of English children's books,

...children's books were always the scene of a battle between instruction and amusement, between restraint and freedom, between hesitant morality and spontaneous happiness.13

It is difficult to measure the effect childhood reading has on a person's future outlook and opinions. It would however, be valid to assume that literature has some effect, ranging from the burst of joy C.S. Lewis experienced on reading *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* to the mistrust of step-mothers engendered by *Cinderella*. What is more assessible is the values and opinions a writer is putting forward as worthwhile for children to adopt as their own. Most critics agree that literature written for girls is more didactic than other children's literature.

Although it was commonly accepted not only that boys would be boys but that men often remained boys if given the opportunity, girls were expected to become women early in their lives; not for them the fantasies and freedom of childhood, but rather conditioning as embryonic little mothers and homemakers.14

What is difficult at times to determine is exactly what message authors of girls' books are trying to convey.
The tidy plot of the tamed rebel is not an adequate outline of these novels. What is startling about nineteenth century girls' fiction is the effort many authors invested in maintaining the integrity of their heroines in the face of social pressures - pressures which are openly acknowledged in the novels. Many of the heroines appear to represent the frustrations of their authors, whose own attempts at recognition or influence may have been thwarted - not necessarily by over-bearing fathers or truculent brothers - but by their own convictions in regard to the proper role of women. The character of Katy Carr in Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* (1872) is an example of this ambivalence. Coolidge put a great deal of imaginative effort into creating an interesting heroine whose actions prevented her fitting comfortably into her society. Katy is humbled and confined to bed by an accident, but what she does eventually gain through her illness is a good deal of power, not so dissimilar to the control she earlier held over her brothers and sisters as a wild and flighty twelve-year-old.

Katy, sitting upstairs in her big chair, held the threads of the house firmly in her hands. (*What Katy Did*)

The unacceptable outward signs of Katy's special nature, playing wild games, tearing her dress and defying Aunt Izzie, are shown to be given away when she is reformed by her accident, but Katy is still successful and powerful, obviously an attractive
character to girls. This seems a more valid reason for the continuing popularity of What Katy Did than Bob Dixon's theory:

...why has this compassionless book been read so widely for over a hundred years? The answer, I think, is in its sentimentality and suffering (or the enjoyment of suffering, which is masochism), with a top-dressing of religion.15

The reaction of Nancy Mitford's Radletts to What Katy Did suggests that the predominant image is of power, not suppression.

The Radlett children would rush for the newspapers every day hoping to see that their parent's ship had gone down with all aboard; they yearned to be total orphans—especially Linda, who saw herself as Katie in What Katie Did [sic], the reins of the household gathered into small but capable hands.16

If the author's aim was to humble or punish Katy for her waywardness and set up some ideal of womanhood as the heart of the house, that aim misfired.

The resolution of the heroine's conflicts in this, and many other girls' novels, is not at all straightforward, and is complicated further by the close relationship between author and heroine suggested by the numerous characters who seek to make writing their career. Comparisons between Alcott and her creation Jo March have often been drawn, with Jo described as 'blatantly autobiographical'. However, the events that might be transferred from fact into fiction are of less importance than the essence creator and heroine share. It is probably true to say that
many authors of girls' books wrote their most dearly held desires and ambitions into their heroines. Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada and Ross in their study of prize-winning picture books contend that, "Because books for young children explicitly articulate the prevailing cultural values, they are an especially useful indicator of societal norms". At the same time the authors acknowledge that their contention can be challenged.

Erving Goffman has questioned the direct relationship we have postulated between the themes in children's literature and societal values. He suggests that literary themes may provide alternative cultural norms or irrelevant fantasy outlets.17

Girls' books too, are "useful indicators of societal norms", but the images they favour are not related to societal norms in a simple or direct manner. In many ways girls' books provide "alternative cultural norms" while, at the same time, reflecting society's values, they both encourage girls to rebel and to conform.

An American study of women's romantic fiction by Tania Modleski, reiterates my basic assumption that the continuing popularity of girls' domestic fiction suggests that these books have something to say to their readers.

Their [Harlequin Romances'] enormous and continuing popularity,... suggests that they speak to very real problems and tensions in women's lives.18
Modleski emphasizes the ways in which much women's fiction is subversive, promoting the strengths of the heroines in comparison to men who are often pictured as cruel, weak, unreliable and ineffectual. She is writing about adult fiction, and there are important differences between books written for women and domestic fiction for girls - but her description of the dual plot in women's fiction is applicable to the ambivalent, compromising and often confusing nature of the plot in girls' domestic fiction.

...contrary to many male critics, women writers of popular fiction have indeed registered protest against the authority of fathers and husbands even while they appeared to give their wholehearted consent to it...but it is not simply the obtuseness of male critics which has prevented the discernment of the alternate plots; these plots have had to be "submerged" into more orthodox ones just as feminine rage itself, blocked in direct expression, has had to be submerged, subterranean, devious.

On the one hand, children's fiction is subject to far greater control than adult fiction, but in writing about girls, authors of family stories had a certain amount of freedom denied authors writing about grown women. The 'naughty' child was quite an acceptable character for those who watched over the content of children's books and to many this would have seemed an adequate description of the rebel's behaviour. The rebel tomboy was in many ways a more engaging, entertaining and - perhaps because of this - more influential figure than the heroines of women's
fiction. At least until her hair was 'put-up' and her skirts lengthened, the rebel was able to defy restriction quite successfully. Another advantage of children's fiction for writers who wanted to promote the virtues of their heroines was the semi-convention of somehow removing or disabling the parents and thereby concentrating on the child characters. In family stories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the socially acceptable hierarchy of father, mother, eldest son, plus siblings was almost always disrupted. As pointed out earlier, it was usually the mother who was killed-off and although this in part reflected the dangers of child-bearing in the nineteenth century, it was a useful device for highlighting the choices for the heroine. She was usually presented with the option of becoming 'mother' and this role involved wifely and motherly duties. The sexual implications of this were modified by making the father more-or-less one of the children or distancing him from the family. In *The Daisy Chain* Ethelred doesn't become 'mother' until after the death of Margaret, the elder sister who had taken on the role following Mrs May's fatal carriage accident. Ethelred is first given the chance to fulfil her ambition (building the church), and the success of her aim changes the nature of her relationship with Dr May in that she becomes his protector. The situation is similar in *Little Women*. Jo experiments with being "the man about the house" in
the absence of her father. However, in the sequels, *Good Wives*, *Jo's Boys*, and *Little Men*, after Jo has tried various ways of living, she eventually becomes a super-mother, with two children of her own and a horde of needy orphans to care for. In all the family stories that took their lead from *The Daisy Chain* and *Little Women*, the rebel was established as having a vastly superior character to others (despite the criticism of the family), and eventually became the mainstay of the family. The term 'family story' suggests an orthodox establishment of parents and children, but in actuality, authors of this type of book were experimenting with the traditional family structure for the purpose of investigating the options for their heroines.

Those who have been critical of girls' domestic fiction see in it a simple pattern - the rebel is somewhat tamed, family friction is reduced and the heroine achieves success, although not necessarily in an area she would have chosen herself. Censorious critics see these books as enforcing stereotypical behaviour in girls, showing readers that to be ambitious or independent is to invite ridicule. However to reduce girls' books to this simple pattern is to ignore certain complexities of plot and characterisation, and is itself a reflection of critics' tendencies to make certain assumptions.
regarding the tastes of girl readers and the aims of women writers. There is no doubt that the ambitions and behaviour of the heroines are undercut and modified, but the manner in which many of the women authors of girls' books wrote, tended to suggest an unwilling capitulation to social expectations. The lasting impression after reading most family stories of the past, is of the heroine's independence, liveliness and courage, and the enduring popularity of books like Little Women implies an importance to readers that is often overlooked.20
You little English children, with your shelves full of pretty story-books, can little realize what a new book used to be in those old days [1850's] to your Australian cousins in the far-away bush.

So writes Ellen Campbell in her short autobiographical novel _An Australian Childhood_ (1892), which chronicles the escapades of twelve-year-old Nellie whose reputation as "the family pickle, the universal scapegrace" is a real-life version of unfettered Australian girlhood published two years before _Seven Little Australians_. The quotation above indicates the limited reading matter available to Australian children before the turn of the century. Nellie does not read children's books at all; like American Jo March she relies on an abundance of Dickens from her father's shelves.

I could repeat pages of the _Old Curiousity Shop_ by heart before I was eleven years old, and had laughed and cried over David Copperfield and Paul Dombey, at an even earlier age.

There were some Australian children's books published in the mid-nineteenth century, and more as the century progressed, but for a reader like Nellie, many of them may have proved unsatisfactory fare, and indeed, most of the authors never intended their audience should be Australian. Certainly it is apparent that Campbell
herself, in a book written so late in the century, is addressing an English, not an Australian audience.

Most early Australian children's books were published in England and many of the authors and illustrators had never set foot in the colony. H.M. Saxby traces approximately fifty books published before the end of the nineteenth century with only one third of these published in Australia.23 Many of these books were written by popular British authors of boys' adventure stories, W.H.G. Kingston, G.A. Henty and George Manville Fenn, who kept to their successful formulae of high adventure and daring deeds, inserting a selection of Australian details to provide the hero with a hardship to overcome and various local curiosities for entertainment. Their descriptions of Australia tended to be somewhat haphazard. Rosemary Wighton cites Kingston's Australian Adventures (1884) as,

an idea of children's book publishing at its most slapdash...it is obvious from a study of the story that the author was given a collection of miscellaneous illustrations, vaguely suitable for Australia, and wove his story about them.24

However the familiarity of the authors with Australia, whether they were residents, visitors, or had never left England, whilst relevant to their handling of facts about the country, had little effect on the style of the books. They were, in the main, adventure books full of action and excitement, with new disasters
crowded into each (usually short) chapter. Richard Rowe's *The Boy in the Bush* (1869) opens with a station (Wonga-Wonga) bailed-up by bushrangers. Shots are fired and people abducted in the first few pages and the hectic pace continues through to the conclusion when 'the boy' Harry announces "majestically" to the family's English governess, "Miss Smith...I no longer consider myself a Boy in the Bush."!25

In books like *The Boy in the Bush*, exotic Australia was presented as to be 'taken' by those with the determination to tame her. This popular picture of a violent and hazardous confrontation between a male aggressor and the untamed land, left few roles for heroines to fill except as minor auxiliaries in the battle. However women and girls were essential to the plot - they could be lost in the bush and abducted by bushrangers, and most importantly, their supposed inability to look after themselves emphasized the comparative competence of men and boys.

Mrs Lawson had fired off her blunderbuss, but it had only broken two panes of the parlour-window, and riddled the verandah posts; so Wonga-Wonga was at the bushrangers' mercy.26

The British writer W.H.G. Kingston had written one book that featured a major female character, *The Diary of Millicent Courtney* (1873). Millicent's first impressions of Sydney indicate how Kingston's "little
knowledge" of Australia was no handicap to invention.

What a large city it is, and so very like an English town, with the same style of houses and shops, and people in them, only here and there we met strange figures, and two or three tattooed New Zealanders, and wild-looking stock-men or cattle drivers, and a group of the aborigines, hideous looking blacks, with their wretched wives, standing near a public house, with flat features and great woolly heads, gesticulating violently to each other, and occasionally a China man in his calico dress, with a pig-tail, and eyes pointing to his nose. Everybody too, seems to be in a hurry, as if engaged in important business.

There were, however, English carriages, with well dressed ladies and gentlemen on horseback, and others on foot, differing in no respect from those we might have seen in any London street. Still, there was a difference - for here in the gardens of some of the houses we saw orange trees in bloom, and flights of little green parrots whistling as they lighted on the walls or the branches of the trees. The steward also brought in some fresh provisions, both meat and vegetables, unlike any we should have found at an English port. The Captain invited us to partake of a haunch of Kangaroo venison, and as a second course a brace of wouga-wouga pigeons, while for dessert we had plantains and locust fruit, pomegranates and cherimoyas.27

Millicent, prompted by the entries in her diary, recalls the events of the past few years when "altered circumstances" drove the family first to the Isle of Wight and then to Australia, the fictional haven for poverty-stricken Englishmen. A major part of the action is set in England, and even when the family reaches Australia, the account of their 'adventures' continues in the same discursive and measured tone. One could imagine Millicent being abducted and calmly describing a bushranger's clothing as she was slung across his saddle - that is if anything so exciting had
occurred in the novel. Kingston neither exploits the Australian setting as Rowe does in *The Boy in the Bush*, nor develops his characters beyond the superficial. The viewpoint of the heroine brings few changes except perhaps to emphasise the spectator role of women in adventure stories.

There are two early children's books, Maud Jeanne Franc's *Golden Gifts: an Australian Tale* (1869) and B.L. Farjeon's *The Golden Land* (1886), where the relationships of characters and their interactions as a family group are as prominent as the exotic setting and the adventures of individual characters. Like Millicent, both books are tales of immigration, where financial setbacks in England force a family to look for new opportunities abroad. Franc's *Golden Gifts* is particularly interesting as it has probably the earliest version of an Australian tomboy character, fifteen-year-old wild Winnie.

Poor Winnie! she had grown up to her fourteenth year amidst a family of rough boys on a station up the North, partaken in all the wild sports of her brothers, with no mother's hand to guard or guide her...Winnie had been suffered to take her own course; to gallop bare-backed on the wildest colts; to wade through creeks; to climb trees; in short, to become as unfeminine as the presiding genius of her home herself.28

Winnie is reformed by a neighbour, Lizzie Wallace, the eldest sister in a family of four brothers and sisters who have emigrated to Australia because of financial difficulties. Winnie is motivated to change because
she has a rival in Edith, Lizzie's sister, for the affections of her cousin, William. Lizzie makes such an effective transformation in Winnie that she, in the end, is a little too refined for William who has been to the goldfields and returns having found God but no gold!

It is very unlikely that Franc would have read *Little Women* before writing *Golden Gifts* as the American book had been published only the year before in 1868, although it is probable she had read some of Charlotte Yonge. Franc's portrait of Winnie does however display many of the motifs of the rebel that were to become so well-established in later years in the British and American family story, particularly authorial ambivalence as to the worth or necessity for the rebel's transformation.

There was a touch of sadness on her face, for amidst other thoughts the freedom of the birds as they fled from tree to tree, wildly caroling, and the joyous manner in which they flitted from bough to bough, set her longing for her old wild freedom, and wondering why limbs that were formed for agile feats should be restrained - why she should not be free and wild, even as those gay little warblers.29

The question as to why Winnie should be restrained is never answered, except perhaps indirectly through the portrait of her father's unkempt home when it was without a 'good' woman to manage it. Franc does not suggest Winnie's special attributes make her better suited for life in Australia, but she does imply that
it is useful if Australian girls and women are strong and able - they just must not show that they are. When Winnie displays her strength by hitching up horses to a wagon, she is reprimanded by her cousin;

'Oh, Willie. I do not want to be weak.'
'I did not say to be, but to seem. I know you can perfectly well lift those heavy poles, but I would far rather have done it for you.'30

As this incident occurs immediately after Winnie's reflections on freedom, it may be meant as an ironical comment on the artificiality of feminine behaviour. **Golden Gifts** would appear to be an early, if not the earliest, Australian fictional exploration of the appropriateness of English feminine conduct in a colonial society, and Franc herself had the sort of background to prompt this sort of questioning. She arrived in Australia in 1852 with her father Henry Congreve, her mother having died on the voyage out. Henry, a schoolmaster, had left England after an "unfortunate investment". He died shortly after arriving in South Australia. Franc became a governess, and then opened her own school in order to support her brothers and sisters. She later married a Baptist minister who died after three years of marriage leaving her with two of her own children and two step-children. She opened a ladies' school and wrote novels, short stories and some journalism, eventually giving up teaching for writing and also became a Deaconness.31

Her own history of independence and hardship is barely
discernible in her portraits of women and family life in *Golden Gifts*. However, although she finally upholds English standards of womanly conduct, the themes of her novel indicate some need to question their appropriateness.

It is not clear as to why *Golden Gifts* has been designated a children's book as Winnie, hardly a child herself, is the youngest major character in the novel. This is not so with Farjeon's *The Golden Land* which is quite obviously meant for children. In *The Golden Land*, the Spencer family is motherless and the eldest girl, Eleanor, (who is only eight years old) while not having the burden of caring for the family, is very sensitive to the needs of her father and brothers. Although the overall structure of the book is similar to many early Australian adventure stories, the characters have few adventures themselves. It is old Uncle David's colourful stories told for the amusement of the children that form the major adventure element of the novel. *The Golden Land* comes close to being the earliest example of an Australian children's family story. Certainly Eleanor has a more prominent role than most colonial heroines, and Farjeon does explore the opportunities for her in Australia, as well as for her brothers. Eleanor is principally identified however with the way of life in England. Whereas the boys' part is forward looking and evocative of the changes
the new life will mean to their futures, Eleanor's task is mainly to provide a touch of comfort from a safer and civilised world.

'Now, all of you,' said Eleanor, 'except Uncle David, go away, and come back in three minutes.' Being Queen of the Bush they had to obey her, and when they returned they found a snow-white tablecloth spread upon the ground, and the tin pannikins and plates set upon it, just as if a grand banquet had been prepared for them. 'Oh!' cried Irving, with an admiring look at the tablecloth, 'that is your something else is it?' 'Yes,' replied Eleanor, 'that is my something else. What do you think of it?' 'Splendiferous!' exclaimed Irving. 'You are a regular household fairy.'32

The Golden Land was an uncommon type of book amongst colonial Australian children's fiction, but it was, nevertheless, about English children and written by an Englishman. The Australian aspects of the story are simply window-dressing; New Zealand or Canada would have done equally well as a setting for the family's adventures. Nettie Palmer writing in 1924 about adult Australian literature, saw what she called "the colonial attitude" as,

almost inevitable in writers of the earlier period...it implie[d] a self-consciousness about externals that [was] against any deep revelation of life and character. Instead of investing their subjects with atmosphere, something the writer has absorbed and has power to give out naturally, they were inclined to daub their pictures with 'local colour' to please eyes likely to be attracted by an unfamiliar surface.33

This type of children's adventure stories continued long after "pioneering adventures were largely a thing of the past", and were still being published when Ethel
Turner and other writers of family stories dominated the market. One of the first critical works on Australian children's books was a study of these colonial novels. Rosemary Wighton's booklet, *Early Australian Children's Literature* (1963), was the first tentative attempt to examine the history and extent of Australian children's literature in any depth.

There is no long-standing tradition of evaluation of Australian children's literature. The first writings on children's fiction were individual reviews of books in newspapers and literary magazines. The *Bulletin's* Red Page extensively reviewed children's books during the 1890's and in the early years of the new century, publicising novels by Ethel and Lilian Turner, Louise Mack, Ella Chaffey and later, Mary Grant Bruce. Nettie Palmer's comments about Turner and Bruce in 1924 were a very isolated example of scholarly or historical interest in children's literature until E. Morris Miller's *Australian Literature From Its Beginnings to 1935* published in 1940. Miller provided extensive bibliographies of the better known children's authors, as well as biographical details and some descriptive notes on individual novels. Most of this useful and otherwise uncollected information was deleted or reduced in Macartney's extended edition of Miller's bibliography published in 1962. Macartney's
reason for excluding most of the juvenile literature was that,

they are a class of books with a restricted use not ordinarily taken into account in surveys of literature, and to include them would bring in a mass of publications which do not engage literary interest in the usual adult sense.36

H.M. Green, whilst not subscribing to the 'thin end of the wedge' outlook, was dismissive of most children's literature in his A History of Australian Literature, 1789-1950, also published in 1962 - Ethel Turner being one of the few authors to receive any praise.37 It is not surprising however, that critics and historians should have taken such a view of Australian children's literature when Australian literature in general was held in such low esteem. A twenty-year-old review in Australian Quarterly of Green's History is a reminder of how recently Australian literature has been an acceptable field of study.

A History of Australian Literature is a massive product of genuine love and scholarship: it may, perhaps, over-dignify its subject-matter, but, granted the significance of Australian literature, these volumes will remain essential works of reference.38

Similarly, the lack of serious study of children's literature, points to a reluctance on the part of scholars to undertake study that may be seen as "over-dignifying its subject-matter".

Geoffrey Dutton, in a survey of writers ("most of them over thirty") he conducted in 1980, found that if
Australians read their own literature at all, they read
Australian children's books.

With the mention of Ethel Turner, Ethel Pedley and
A.E. and Louise Mack..., a strong element enters
the shaky tradition of Australian literature, that
of children's books. It is not surprising, of
course, that children should read children's
books...but what emerged most powerfully from the
answers to my questionnaire was that the
children's books these writers read were those
that gave them the strongest sense of belonging to
Australia. Mary Grant Bruce was the most popular
writer (read by as many boys as girls), followed
by Ethel Turner, May Gibbs, Mrs Aeneas
Gunn...Louise Mack, Norman Lindsay...and Ethel
Pedley.39

It is only very recently that historians and critics
have begun to explore and to value what is now
acknowledged as an influential, vigorous and
entertaining part of our literary and social heritage.
In 1974 David Walker still found it necessary to make a
plea for critical consideration of popular Australian
writers, among them Mary Grant Bruce and Ethel Turner.

For too long Australian studies have been hampered
by the neglect of writers who have managed to win
and sustain a wider popular appeal. Much of this
neglect can be attributed to the pursuit of
literary respectability by critics anxious to
defend the cultural traditions of society. Such
critics often look with disdain upon writers who
are popular and with distrust at those who claim
that literature does reflect, and enshrine,
however obliquely, many of the values and
assumptions of the wider society. It is now
necessary to shelve these doubts in order to
discover what the popular novelist has to say
about Australian society.40

It was in the seventies that two major
contributions were made to the study of Australian
children's literature, H.M. Saxby's A History of
Australian Children's Literature (1969 and 1971) and Marcie Muir's A Bibliography of Australian Children's Books (1970-76), and these are still the most important and influential texts in the field. Saxby's work has been particularly influential due to its careful categorising and extensive critical evaluation of Australian children's books. What detracts from his History is Saxby's presumptions about the reading interests of boys and girls, the differing values he places on certain types of books, and his notion of reality which lead him to denigrate or undervalue much Australian fiction meant principally for girl readers. On the basis of mostly foreign reading surveys, many carried out in the 1920's and 1940's, Saxby makes the following general statement regarding children's reading interests.

Adventure stories lure the reader in the lower primary school, but such readers also respond to stories of animals, both domestic and those in their natural habitat. Humorous stories continue to be popular, and this age also marks the peak of interest in fairy stories, as well as an awakening of interest in myths and legends, and modern fantasy. It would seem that the interests of boys and girls begin to diverge at this point, the boys striking out for the more realistic narrative, and the girls turning towards stories of home and school life. This divergence is more marked in the upper primary school, when boys become intensely interested in adventure, sport and science, while girls tend to follow family stories, school stories, and books that are more "sentimental", with even a dash of romantic love. Girls also like career stories (although some boys read these too), stories of the theatre; and sometimes 'horse' stories become a near
mania...The young adolescent boy follows adventure and sports stories, school stories, biography, and stories of real life heroes, detectives, and home life. Girls, according to Connell, take to:

...stories of home life, gentle sentiment and tempered excitement which will give them a feeling of security and stability in an unsure world...44

The implications of this statement are that girls' books, that is "stories of home and school life", are romantic and fanciful and less 'real' than boys' books, that is "adventure and sports stories". This generalisation pervades Saxby's assessment of the books examined in his History.

As Saxby values reality45 in children's books and contends that boys prefer "the more realistic narrative", it follows that he tends to favour boys' books, that is adventure stories, and suggests that women, as characters or authors, detract from the quality of an adventure book.

Baker's Dozen [Celia Syred, 1969] is indicative of what has happened to the novel of pioneering adventure since its resurrection in 1950. Compared with the full-blooded form which was developed from 1850 to 1900 the present species has had its life-blood wrung from it. In spite of the meticulous reconstruction of Mavis Thorpe Clark and the careful research of Elizabeth Wilton there has been an emaciation of the form which is now pallid and anaemic. Perhaps this was a man's world into which women have intruded to no great advantage. Most of the early writers were men and their female characters were peripheral. Certainly romance as such was barely ever hinted at. Presently the theme is being handled mainly
by women writers. There are now as many heroines as heroes and there is sometimes romance in the air. Women are still a refining influence as they were in the nineteenth century version, but they have now become more intrusive, even central to the action.46

In his preference for adventure stories (and his reasons for this preference) Saxby both relaxes his requirements for realism in children's books and indicates his allegiance to an Australian myth sanctioned and supported by many Australian historians and literary commentators. Wighton in Early Australian Children's Literature refers to the dominant themes of early Australian children's books as "moulding" a "juvenile myth of Australian life".

...not only did most of the Australian children's books of the last century tend to tell their readers what they ought to know about Australia, but also they told them again and again what they wanted to hear - the particular things that were popularly connected with this new country, such as pioneering, bushrangers, marauding blacks, bushfires, and so on.47

Saxby's obvious preference for full-blooded adventure stories sits ill with the value he places on his notion of reality.

The important thing is that the writer creates an authentic scene, portrays characters that he knows, and tells a story that has meaning and relevance because it arises out of his experience and understanding of life...it matters a great deal that an author writes about what he knows and feels.48

Saxby agrees with Wighton that, in the main, these books were romantic fabrications written by authors generally unfamiliar with Australia and written to tantalize a British audience. Unfortunately his
admiration for their qualities of immediacy and vigour leads him to compare unfavourably books that are written at a different time, for a different audience and with different aims. As Modleski points out,

...the feminine text itself is often used as a standard by which other products are measured and found to be not wanting.49

The juvenile myth about Australian life set-up by the early Australian adventure books has not been entirely dispelled by later authors such as Ethel Turner and Louise Mack. Rosemary Wighton is enthusiastic about these 'two authors who, she feels, represent the true beginning of Australian children's literature.

An important change in the presentation of life in Australia in children's books came about with the publication of the work of two women novelists, Ethel Turner and Louise Mack...When one comes to the work of these two writers, one feels that here at last is a consecutive and convincing picture, and that their predecessors were mostly doing little more than throwing a light here and light there, and only too often illuminating the idealized surface features of Australian life.50

And also,

The writing of Australian books for children has a chance of becoming, after this [Turner's and Mack's books], an activity of recognizably Australian writers, rather than a minor branch of English children's literature.51

Although Saxby acknowledges the special contribution of both these authors to Australian children's literature and goes a long way to matching Wighton's enthusiasm, he fails to acknowledge the particular value of these
books for girl readers, who, until the publication of Seven Little Australians, had no well-rounded literary images of themselves, something Saxby thinks is an important requirement of children's books.

They [Ethel Turner's books] offer the young reader, especially the young Australian reader, an opportunity to identify himself with them. He is found, he recovers from illness, he is offered sympathy; he learns to accept life, to control his passion, and to discover the solid values of the middle-class world.52

Saxby does however, on several occasions, recognise the special needs of boy readers to identify with literary characters who represent vital and attractive aspects of boyhood.

Boyhood is an international and universal experience. It can find expression for its creative energy in fishing for yabbies in a country creek, mustering cattle on a station property...The writer that will speak to all generations is the one who has kept intact his own youth and yet who can, by perceptive observation, get beneath the skin of the child today.53

Saxby's dissatisfaction with women as part of adventure stories also tends to colour his attitude to family stories, or in fact any book written with girl readers in mind. He appears to be most concerned that stories written for girls by women writers tend to be romantic, sentimental or both. Where he is indulgent towards boys' books that may be "undistinguished as literature" noting that "they nevertheless provided the kind of reading that meets the interests of the adolescent boy"54, he is fiercely critical of girls' books that he regards as second-rate, perhaps due to a mistaken idea
about the "needs and interests" of girl readers. In writing of early children's books as compared to modern literature Saxby notes:

Where the writer of children's books in the past aimed to instruct, to preach, and to accelerate the change from child to adult, the writer of today, if he had integrity, seeks to bring delight by meeting the child's present needs and interests, thus enriching his experience and deepening his perception and understanding of life...55

In his criticism of certain books written for girls, Saxby fails to recognise the principal attraction of these books for girl readers, that is, they all portray vigorous, vital and independent heroines. His lack of insight is apparent in his comments on the work of Mary Patchett, a prolific and very popular writer of the 1950's and 1960's.

Through a great deal of gush there does appear a sincere love of the bush and its animals, although Miss Patchett's popularity with young feminine readers is an indication of the effect of schmaltz. Her plots lack structure, her prose is pallid, and there are few moments of tension.56

Saxby is also critical of two writers of the 1940's, Gladys Lister and the writer of the popular Poppy Treloar books, Pixie O'Harris.

During the forties they [Lister and O'Harris] were joined by a bevy of female writers who set out to entertain children and present them with the right values - if such consist of conforming to middle-class mores and accepting the conventions of polite society. These ladies had a condescending gaze that reached downward to childhood, that seldom saw life at the child's level, and almost never looked upward with the fear, the wonder and the excitement of a child attaining the status of a self-determining individual.57
With books such as this [Poppy Treloar] the stereotyped children's book is established in Australia...one wonders why books such as Poppy Treloar were ever published. The plots are escapist and unreal; the literary style impoverished and quite undemanding of the reader. Perhaps that is why they have been popular with children.58

However, as Auchmuty points out in her article "The Schoolgirl Formula", the fact that certain popular books may be regarded as "'bad literature'...has never diminished their cultural importance".59 In writing of the success of the English "Chalet School" series she notes,

...the fact remains that the books continued to appear in all their unreality, because there was a demand for them.60 [Auchmuty's emphasis]

There was certainly a demand for the [Poppy Treloar] books. The Fortunes of [Poppy Treloar](1941) was reprinted in 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1969.61 The success of a book such as [Poppy Treloar] is not at all difficult to understand. Poppy is good-looking, has a mysterious past, is clever, independent, and eventually rich. Girls enjoy reading about other successful girls, and this preference for seeing themselves in print as resourceful, vigorous beings has ensured the continuing popularity of heroines such as Jane Eyre, Jo March, Judy Woolcot and Katy Carr.

Saxby's preference for adventure books, his incomplete understanding of the needs and interests of girl readers, and his failure to recognise sentimental
and romantic aspects of girls' books as a type of escapism, which is neither better nor worse than the romantic escapism characteristic of boys' adventure books - has meant a less than balanced critical account of the history of children's literature in Australia. However, until very recently, his study has been the only wide-ranging and scholarly critical work on Australian children's literature. In the late seventies and eighties the History's uniqueness (although not its pre-eminence) ceased with the publication of books by Brenda Niall, Walter McVitty, Alison Alexander and Phillipa Poole. For those interested in Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce, 1979 provided an abundance of riches. Phillipa Poole, Ethel Turner's granddaughter, edited a selection of entries from the Turner diaries, resulting in a very readable and revealing account of Turner's life and attitudes.62 In the same year Brenda Niall examined the lives and writing of Mary Grant Bruce and Ethel Turner in Seven Little Billabongs.63 Niall brought together diaries, archival material, and critical analyses in a very thoroughly researched book that made a major contribution to the study of Australian children's books. Alison Alexander's biography of Mary Grant Bruce was less satisfactory, particularly in regard to referencing of sources.64 Also in 1979, Wighton's important study of early children's literature was re-
issued by Casuarina Press. In *Innocence and Experience* (1981), Walter McVitty compiled eight essays on modern Australian authors he had previously published in the journal *Reading Time*. McVitty was one of the many distinguished contributors to this publication of the Australian Children's Book Council. *Reading Time*, together with *Orana* (published by the School and Children's Libraries Section of the Library Association of Australia) have both been an important source of comment and research in Australian children's literature during the years when more substantial publications were few. In 1982, Marcie Muir, the compiler of the *Bibliography of Australian Children's Books*, published *A History of Australian Children's Book Illustration* and more recently Brenda Niall brought out a second book on Australian children's fiction, *Australia Through the Looking-Glass* (1984), sections of which dealt with authors such as Louise Mack and Lilian Turner who had previously attracted little critical attention.

Overall, the bibliographic and biographical details of the literature and the authors has been well served, although an update of Muir's work is needed. Niall has been the first to exploit archival material in researching and writing in a specialised field and it is in this area that more work is required. Although there has been quite extensive research on
Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce (particularly Niall's two books), their novels have not been considered in regard to their contribution to a particular genre, nor compared with others writing in the same genre. Certainly no one has looked at the heroine in domestic fiction and traced her progress through the almost one hundred year history of the family story in Australia. The family story has been the dominant genre of Australian children's fiction. It has usually been written by women about other women and girls, leading to a distinctly feminine bias that is unusual in other Australian literary and artistic areas. Ethel Turner, the first and most prolific writer of family stories for Australian children, established with her first novel, *Seven Little Australians*, connections with a long tradition of girls' fiction, but at the same time augered a diversity and experimentation in the genre which would proclaim a distinctive Australian 'compound'.
"I do want Fame - plenty of it."

Ethel Turner Diaries, 18th January 1893.
Morning wrote Between Ourselves. Afternoon sewed
and idled. Night started a new story that I shall
call 'Seven Little Australians'. I don't think
I'll let it go in the Illustrated, if I can do
without it there I'll see if I can get it
(27th January, 1893)¹

Ethel Turner's Seven Little Australians was one of
the publishing sensations of the 1890's in Australia.
Reviewers were enthusiastic, the first edition sold out
quickly and the book, although intended for children,
was read by everyone. Almost all the early reviews saw
Seven Little Australians as something new and original
in Australian children's literature.

A new departure in the form of an Australian book
for children, racy of the sort, bright, pure, and
in several respects equal in point of originality
and power to some of the best work that has been
done by the best writers in this particular branch
of fiction.²

William Steele, the representative in Melbourne of the
London publisher Ward, Lock and Bowden, wrote to Turner
in December 1894:

As far as Australia is concerned we can safely say
that your entrance into literary life is a
success, your first book has received the most
flattering attention, and the second book will be
looked forward to with considerable expectation.³

At the age of twenty-two Ethel Turner was a celebrity
and the first Australian writer for children to enjoy
such widespread acclaim. She was young, pretty,
ambitious and, although she often criticised herself
for 'idleness', was willing to work very hard to
achieve success. Each year she set goals for the following year and almost always achieved them.

Last year I said I would have £50 in the bank and 6 of everything made. Have taken lessons in Music and Singing. Have finished one book 'Tekel'. Have a children's book published and have written some short stories for Bulletin etc. Almost realised. I have saved £50 (but am just going to spend half on a trip.) I have done none of the T. sewing I have taken a quarters singing lessons. No music. Finished Tekel as a competition story for Cassels, - don't know its fate. Written a Children's Book - 7 Little Australians and had it accepted - publication in 3 months. Done a Children's Page weekly for Illustrated. "Between Ourselves" first-half of year and Tasmanian Mail first half. Written and had accepted following short stories [Turner lists twelve stories]

Ethel Turner obviously had writing as her top priority; the "Fame" she so badly wanted was not going to be achieved through sewing. For Turner, 1893 was a productive year at a time when the rest of the country was suffering from a devastating depression. She commented in her diary on the closure of The Commercial Bank that "...the end of the world must be at hand." Her adult novel Tekel (never published), entered for the same Cassel's competition that her sister, Lilian, won with The Lights of Sydney, was written in under eight days. In the latter half of 1893, Turner wrote Tekel, the major part of Seven Little Australians, a play The Wig (staged on 24th July, 1894 by the Sydney University Dramatic Society), wrote several short
stories and met weekly journal commitments. She wrote Tekel "like a steam engine" and her diary often records days of remarkable productivity.

Did a lot of writing - 7 hours of it altogether. Did Children's Page entirely, finished and copied out 'The Midget to the Rescue' made up a specimen Children's Annual to speak to Mr Bennet about and copied out Chapter 8. 7 A's. In afternoon went down to Mrs Hollinworth's for afternoon tea...8

Having finished Seven Little Australians, hardly pausing for a rest, she started The Story of a Baby in November 1893 and the sequel to Seven Little Australians, first titled Growing Up, in December, "I shall just see how long it takes me", she comments blithely.9

Turner's enthusiasm and energy during this time is encapsulated in Seven Little Australians. Undoubtedly part of the book's attraction when first published was its positive view of Australia and its youth when otherwise, things seemed very dark.

There is a lurking sparkle of joyousness and rebellion and mischief here, and therefore in children.

Often the light grows dull and the bright colouring fades to neutral tints in the dust and heat of the day. But when it survives play-days and school-days, circumstances alone determine whether the electric sparkle shall go to play will-o'-the-wisp with the larrikin type, or warm the breasts of the spirited, single-hearted, loyal ones who alone can 'Advance Australia'.10

Ethel Turner's own youth was a mixture of joyousness, sadness, excitement and single-mindedness. She arrived in Australia with her mother, Sarah Turner, and two
sisters, Lilian and Jeannie Rose (Rosie), in 1880, aged almost eight years. Mrs Turner married for the third time (Ethel's and Lilian's father George Burwell had died around 1874 and their stepfather Henry Turner in 1879) within twelve months of the family's arrival in Australia. The relationship between Ethel and her new stepfather Charles Cope became very stormy and strained in future years mainly because of Mr Cope's resistance to the idea of Ethel or her sister Lilian marrying, "He [Mr Cope] declares he would rather bury me than see me married". Ethel's diary often records the upsets caused by this man's difficult and excitable nature. She particularly objected to his treatment of her mother whom she loved very much, describing her after yet "another domestic storm" as "a good woman, - my idea of a good woman". An incident on her wedding day illustrates Mr Cope's extraordinary behaviour.

...Herbert [Curlewis, Ethel's husband] taking my hand - putting on the new strange little ring. Mr... King's voice again - then a burst of organ and Herbert lifting my veil for the first kiss - and Mr Cope brushing roughly up, pushing him aside and taking the first before anyone could recover from the surprise - it was cruel, wicked.

Ethel's determination from a very young age to be independent and successful no doubt had much to do with her unwillingness to rely on Mr Cope for support. In March 1892 when she felt her writing career was in a
slump she wrote,

I shall go out and be a governess I think, I can't live on £10 a year and I won't let Mr Cope keep me after being independent for over three years.15

This early independence was mostly due to a sixpenny monthly magazine, The Parthenon, run jointly by Ethel and her older sister Lilian. It was launched early in 1889 (Ethel was only seventeen) and was supported by advertisements from Sydney firms.16 The Parthenon was a mixture of essays, fiction and special interest pages. Ethel later gave an amusing account of how she came to write the despised children's pages and unwittingly took the first steps towards her professional career:

We went headlong to launch a magazine into the world—a little sixpenny monthly, yclept 'The Parthenon'—an odd farrago of sentimental stories and limping verses, fashion, cookery, and 'literary articles'. We quarrelled briskly as to who should do the last-named; we both were eager to dash off erudite pages, gravely 'explaining' Browning or Meredith, and quoting with gusto our favourite passages.

'I am the elder,' said my sister, after a wordy warfare; 'I shall do them. But we've forgotten something,—we'll have to have a Children's Page; all papers do. You can write that.'

I refused the honour with much contempt, and we finally settled the matter by drawing lots. The short slip of paper fell to me...So that is how 'Seven Little Australians' came to be written, instead of the almighty book that I am still convinced would have convulsed the world.17

Children's Pages in various publications were to become in the future, a reliable source of income for Turner; yet her dissatisfaction with writing material for
children in preference to adult literature lingered throughout her writing career.

Seven Little Australians was initially regarded by Turner as something of a side-line, a piece of writing whose importance was only distinguished from her short stories by its length.

Night copied out the 7th Chapter 7 Australians, it's a big undertaking writing a book.18 The obvious enthusiasm of Ward, Lock in regard to her manuscript, and the anticipation of being the author of a proper book, quickly changed her attitude towards it. The publishers made an offer for Seven Little Australians within a week of receiving the manuscript, labouriously copied out by Turner and posted at great expense ("It took 18 stamps").19 The negotiations for copyright and royalties were completed swiftly.

I had a letter from Ward and Lock making a further proposal about 7 Little Australians. They offer £15 for copyright and a royalty of 2 1/2 [pence] on each copy sold at 2/6. They say it shall be well bound and be illustrated by a first class artist...and they say they are very glad indeed to be associated with the Louisa Alcott of Australia. Such a nice letter it was.20

Early reviewers of Seven Little Australians took up Mr Steele's description of Ethel Turner as "the Louisa Alcott of Australia".

Just as Judy is moulded after Jo, of Miss Alcott's 'Little Women', so is Meg patterned upon her namesake among the March girls. These two are the living figures of Miss Turner's tale, and the author can be complimented in their individuality.
It is no fault to imitate so admirable an example as the Boston writer, endeared to so many thousands by recollections of her pleasant creations.21

It was in many ways an appropriate title, acknowledging both Turner's major literary influences and the book's intended audience. However, it did obscure a principal aim of the book. Turner's tale of the everyday adventures of the Woolcot family is, in part, a parody of the sort of family stories she had read and enjoyed as a girl. The most striking difference between *Seven Little Australians*, its British and American family story predecessors, and earlier Australian children's books, is in the characterisation of the children, and most noticeably, and importantly, of the girls. A girl as the central character was rare in Australian children's fiction prior to the publication of *Seven Little Australians*, and Turner's heroine Judy Woolcot was a creation whose character seemed to depend as much on the circumstances of her Australian upbringing, as on the persuasive influence of famous foreign literary forebears. Ethel Turner was without doubt the first Australian children's writer to acknowledge that "young-hearted" Australia held out possibilities for women as well as men many miles removed from the influence of England's "long years' sorrowful history".

*Seven Little Australians* is very much part of the tradition of family stories, but it makes a special
claim for the alteration of the genre to fit an Australian context. An equally apt by-line for Ward, Lock's advertising would have been 'Ethel Turner, Australian challenger to Louisa Alcott'. Any comparison between *Seven Little Australians* and *Little Women*, supports the contention voiced by Brenda Niall, that Turner was throwing "most of the nursery furniture out of the Misrule windows in 1894".22

Let me tell you about my seven select spirits. They are having nursery tea at the present moment with a minimum of comfort and a maximum of noise,...Nursery tea is more an English institution than an Australian one; there is a kind of *bon camaraderie* feeling between parents and young folks here, and an utter absence of veneration on the part of the latter. So even in the most wealthy families it seldom happens that the parents dine in solemn state alone, while the children are having a simple tea in another room: they all assemble around the same board, and the young ones partake of the same dishes, and sustain their parts in the conversation right nobly.

But, given a very particular and rather irritable father, and seven children with excellent lungs and tireless tongues, what could you do but give them separate rooms to take their meals in?

Captain Woolcot, the father, in addition to this division, had had thick felt put over the swing door upstairs, but the noise used to float down to the dining-room in a cheerful, unconcerned manner despite it. (pp10-11)

The fact that the children do dine separately aligns Captain Woolcot with the English vision of childhood which Turner sees expressed in righteous books like *Sandford and Merton*. Her book, she tells the reader,
will be very different to "standard juvenile works".

Before you fairly start this story I should like to give you just a word of warning.

If you imagine you are going to read of model children, with perhaps a naughtily inclined one to point a moral, you had better lay down the book immediately and betake yourself to Sandford and Merton, or similar standard juvenile works.(p9)

The special nature of the Australian child is what interests Ethel Turner in _Seven Little Australians_. Captain Woolcot represents the opinions of the 'Old Country' whilst the children, especially Judy (the "worst" and the "cleverest" of the children), the youthful spirit of a new society. Nineteenth century social chroniclers like R.E.N. Twopeny particularly regretted the public taste for "the naughty boy and wilful girl, looking as it does upon these qualities as prophetic of future enterprise". He casts a somewhat disapproving eye on the exploits of the young Australian, but his picture of Australian childhood freedom does tally with Turner's.

I have a holy horror of babies, to whatever nationality they may belong; but for general objectionableness I believe there are none to compare with the Australian baby...the little brute is omnipresent, and I might almost add omnipotent...Nurseries are few and far between...Wherever his mother goes, baby is also taken...He has breathed the free air of Australian independence too early to have much regard for the fifth commandment.

Twopeny felt, however, that the circumstances of Australian life were of positive benefit to girls who "were a decided improvement" on their brothers once old
enough to be "treated according to sex":

...the colonial girl is sharper at picking up what her mistress does know than the English one, and she has more of the boy's emulation...She is handy with her fingers, frank, but by no means necessarily fast in manner, good-natured and fond of every species of fun...25

To the obvious delight of Australian readers, Turner celebrated the freedom of an Australian childhood. Banjo Paterson, writing to Turner in 1895, felt the book's success was evidence that "the feeling in favour of Australians is growing".26

The main character of *Seven Little Australians*, Judy Woolcot, embodies the positive aspects of an Australian childhood as well as the fears Turner held of a misunderstanding or abuse of that freedom. Judy, unlike Jo March of *Little Women*, is a rebel in an already disorderly household. If Judy had lain on a Misrule carpet and whistled, it is unlikely that anyone would have given her a second glance, let alone admonished her for unladylike behaviour. Esther Woolcot the stepmother is only twenty, and not at all the unwanted tyrant of a motherless family usually found in children's literature:

...just a lovely laughing-faced girl, whom they all adored, and who was very little steadier and very little more of a housekeeper than Meg. (p12)

Esther is little different from the children tyrannized by Captain Woolcot who "was 'a military man', and much from home". Apart from dealing out the occasional
beating, the Captain does little to manage his large family effectually, and blames the children's unruliness on others' neglect - usually Esther's. Captain Woolcot lavishes more care on his animals than the children.

The father kept three beautiful horses...so, to make up, the children - not that they cared in the slightest - went about in shabby, out-of-elbow clothes, and much-worn boots. (p17)

Esther and Captain Woolcot are the antithesis of wise and stable parents such as Mr and Mrs March and Dr Carr (What Katy Did), and the Woolcot home is not at all the orderly refuge typical of most family stories.

Echoes of Little Women are apparent in the descriptions and characterisation of the Woolcot children. The eldest Woolcot is called Meg.

Meg was the eldest of the family, and had a long, fair plait that Bunty used to delight in pulling, a sweet, rather dreamy face, and a powdering of pretty freckles that occasioned her much tribulation of spirit. (p16)

Nell is an Amy figure with "gold hair clustering in wonderful waves around her face, soft hazel eyes, and a little rosebud of a mouth". Judy, like Jo March to Amy, is "the greatest contrast imaginable" to Nell, with "a mane of untidy curly dark hair that was the trial of her life".

Judy, I think, was never seen to walk, and seldom looked picturesque. If she did not dash madly to the place she wished to get to, she would progress by a series of jumps, bounds, and odd little skips. She was very thin, as people generally are who have quicksilver instead of blood in their
veins; she had a small, eager, freckled face, with very bright dark eyes, a small, determined mouth,...

Her brilliant inventive powers plunged them all into ceaseless scrapes, and though she often bore the brunt of the blame with equanimity, they used to turn round, not infrequently, and upbraid her for suggesting the mischief. (pl5)

Meg, Nell and Judy, together with the other children Pip, Bunty, Baby and one-year-old Peter, "the General", spend their days in the paddocks around their house on the Parramatta River, sustained mostly by bread, tea and poorly cooked mutton, badly dressed, haphazardly educated and largely undisciplined. Against this background, Jo March's peccadillos would have gone unnoticed, and therefore Judy's pranks have to be more sensational to mark her as the rebel. However, in spite of the other children's untutored and unkempt existence, they all fill basically conservative and acceptable roles. Meg, after a few lapses, does try to fill a 'proper' elder-sister role. Meg and Pip (the eldest boy) reflect aspects of their step-mother and father, and therefore have a readily defined future, fitting comfortably into the contemporary social setting. Even Bunty's sins, lying and thieving, are unimaginative wrongdoings, simply dealt with. Lying and thieving are wrong, therefore Bunty is punished. Thirteen-year-old Judy's transgressions are not so easily dealt with within any widely accepted moral or social framework. Judy's brand of
independence makes her stand-out strikingly from the other children, and from her parents. There is an aura of unpredictability and daring about Judy that also sets her apart from her literary forebears, Ethelred May, Katy Carr, and Jo March. Judy has "quicksilver instead of blood" in her veins, and a keen fineness of spirit. What perhaps sets her most apart is that Judy is only once referred to as boyish. Turner does not demean her specialness by suggesting Judy can seek emotional gratification by pretending to be a boy. There is a sense of real danger and pathos in Judy's situation. She has no restraining hand, no family guidance (as Jo has in the March family) to point a moral. Judy has to mark her own boundaries, but such is her nature, she always seems to totter on the edge of destruction.

Pip chose one, [a horse] a grey, with long, fleet-looking legs and a narrow, beautiful head; he prided himself on knowing something about 'points'. Judy picked a black, with reddish, restless eyes, but Mr Hassel refused it because it had an uncertain temper, so she had to be content with a brown with a soft, satiny nose. (p187-188)

Turner never suggests that Judy's spirit should be suppressed. Rather, according to the Captain's view, Judy wants the guidance of "a firm hand".

He [Captain Woolcot] remembered her own mother had often said she trembled for Judy's future. That restless fire of hers that shone out of her dancing eyes, and glowed scarlet on her cheeks in excitement, and lent amazing energy and activity
to her young, lithe, body, would either make a noble, daring, brilliant woman of her or else she would be shipwrecked on rocks the others would never come to, and it would flame up higher and higher and consume her. (pp36-37)

The problem lies in the fact that the other children will never reach the perilous rocks to which Judy's daring will take her. Her father is incapable through sheer lack of understanding of any existence apart from his strictly regimented gentlemanly-soldier world to help her pass them safely. *Seven Little Australians* is concerned very much with the dilemma of Captain Woolcot's lack of vision:

Her father could not 'be careful' of her because he absolutely did not know how. (p37)

Turner's shift of emphasis in *Seven Little Australians*, high-lighting the Captain's inability to deal with Judy's nature rather than Judy herself worrying about being different from other girls, is a significant change from the general trend of domestic fiction. The fact that Judy does not fit comfortably into an acceptable role becomes a problem for those who are rigidly conservative. Judy's punishments do not change her, but rather reflect Captain Woolcot's inability to cope. Turner deliberately turns the tables on past domestic fiction by allowing Judy to survive each setback unscathed and unchanged. In contrast to Katy's accident and illness in *What Katy Did*, a 'School of Pain' contriving to awaken her to a
sense of womanly duty, Judy's illness (inflammation of
the lungs) does not change her at all.

In three weeks she was about the house again, thin
and great-eyed, but full of nonsense and even
mischief once more. (p163)

Judy's illness is, however, a great shock to the
Captain, and the family Doctor awakens him again to a
sense of his responsibility:

'...she seems to be always in a perfect fever of
living, and to possess a capacity for joy and
unhappiness quite unknown to slower natures. Take
care of her, Woolcot, and she'll make a fine woman
some day - ay, a grand woman.' (p164)

Turner's creation of a character like Judy is a
revolutionary adaptation of past girl heroines in
children's books. Judy is an amalgamation of the
inventive, energetic pre-accident Katy Carr, and has
the high principles which Ethelred May channeled into
religious work. Like Jo March in Little Women, Judy
dominates Seven Little Australians through the force of
her character and her inventive, entertaining
escapades. She is a very attractive character who, it
is suggested in one of Turner's later novels, the semi-
autobiographical Three Little Maids(1900), had for a
long time been a part of Turner's imaginative world.

The queen of spades was Dolly's heroine now; she
saw in her a dark little girl with flashing eyes
and a propensity for getting into terrible
mischief, and then dying with pious words of
exhortation on her lips and all her weeping
relatives around her bed. She was a unique
mixture of Topsy and Eva, and Dolly named her
Judy.27
One of the shells, a pretty bluish grey, was always 'Mary', a model eldest sister; a tiny smooth scallop, snow-white, was 'Muriel', who used to be chiefly occupied in dying. And a very bright, brown, thin one with black, irregular markings on it was always 'Judy'.

Her death greatly diminished the attractiveness of future Woolcot family sequels and seemed to run contrary to the usual fate of heroines in domestic fiction. Judy's fatal accident is, however, another, more radical, instance of the compromise adopted by every author of domestic fiction in the nineteenth century. In spite of the doctor's clear-eyed vision of Judy as a grown woman, "she'll make a fine woman some day - ay a grand woman", Turner was obviously aware of the difficulties of portraying a grown-up Judy. A review in the *Sunday Times* suggested that Turner would "probably regret the day she killed Judy", however their (tongue-in-cheek?) suggestions for what Judy might have done in the future only underline Turner's difficulties.

There were vast possibilities before Judy. She could easily have been made the central figure of a second book. There was both comedy and tragedy in her nature, and her mother's warning to her father fittingly suggested the likelihood of uncommon incidents in her life. She might have run away with a circus or "gone upon the stage" like Madame Du Van. Or again, Miss Turner might have married her to a bank manager, and had her bail him up at the point of a revolver, and hand him over to the police when he proposed to levant with the contents of the safe. Judy was built for a dramatic situation of that kind...The baby could have been better spared.

Turner seems to have 'run short' of inspiration in relation to Judy, soon after the chapters regarding her
illness. When Turner the author writes "It is so hard to write it", that is, an account of Judy's accident and death, there seems hardly any need to do so. With the change of scene to Yarrahappini, Pip and Meg become more prominent, and Judy's development as a character is diminished.

Pip was going to be a stockman and brand and draft cattle all the days of his life. Judy was going to be his aide-de-camp, provided he let her stay in the saddle, and provided her with a whip just as long as his own. (p196)

This is a turnabout on the earlier times when Judy led Pip into adventure, for example in the episode The General Sees Active Service.

'Yes,' Judy said quietly. 'I've got a plan...I'm going to leave the General here at the Barracks for a couple of hours till we come back, his father being the proper person to watch over him.'...

'Oh, I say,' remarked Pip, 'we'll get in an awful row, you know, Fizz. I don't think we'd better-I don't really, old girl.'...

'I'll slip quietly along the veranda and into his own room, and put the coat and the General on the bed; then I'll tell a soldier to go and tell Father his parcels have come, and while he's gone I'll fly back to you, and we'll catch the tram and go to the Aquarium.'

Pip whistled again, softly. He was used to bold proposals from this sister of his, but this was beyond everything...'I don't like it, Fizz...'. Judy gave him one exasperated look. 'Go and see if that's the Bondi tram coming,'... (pp53-54)

Judy really dies twice in Seven Little Australians. Her accident appears to be an evasion on Turner's part, an acknowledgement of her inability to develop such an outstanding individual character.
Turner is aware that Judy will not fit any of the roles assigned to nineteenth century women, and in many ways, killing Judy appears to be Turner's only alternative if she is to avoid doing violence to Judy's character. 

Seven Little Australians is a re-statement of the forward-looking spirit of pioneering Australia from the viewpoint of a young city woman, who embodied the dynamic aspect of this spirit in the character of a thirteen year old girl. Today, disillusioned Australians might see Judy's fate as prophetic of the grand hopes of Federation, but an American visitor to Australia, the missionary Jessie Ackerman, agreed that "the real Australian girl" was the nation's, and the world's hope for the future.

The world's greatest reforms must be brought about by girls, and Australia is the natural starting-point. 30

Although distressed that Australian girls still trod "the same old disgustingly false and unreal social highway of past, decayed and buried generations" 31 she nevertheless felt the special qualities of Australian life could only promote the cause of women, and this in turn would lead to social reform.

Australians were happy to be convinced that Turner's picture of childhood and girlhood freedom was
an accurate reflection of Australian life and ideals.

The real miracle of the story to myself was that it could be so exciting and real and Australian. I have read it to my children and the interest never flags.32

The literary critic Nettie Palmer was lavish in her praise of Ethel Turner for showing Australian children that their country was not "some abnormal antipodes, for which they must apologize".33 It was always *Seven Little Australians* that provoked this sort of comment in later years - Turner's first success was certainly her greatest. In considering why "this quiet story" should have had such success, Frank Dalby Davison suggested,

> The reason is that it was among the forerunners, if not the actual forerunner of what at that time was a modernist movement in juvenile literature.34

The *Bulletin* had made even greater claims for Turner in 1895 in a review of the sequel to *Seven Little Australians*, *The Family at Misrule* (1895).

> It looks, indeed, as if we were on the eve of a renascence of Australian literary art...with Louis Becke, Ethel Turner, and 'The Banjo' well 'arrived'; with Lawson, and Daley, and Montgomery approaching the goal; with many other *Bulletin* writers well started in the race; it would really seem that 1900 will be able to cull for a favourite book-shelf a dozen new books of permanent value to take their place beside the favourite old ones.35

The *Bulletin* placed Turner quite happily amongst writers who now are considered to have written quite differently. It is not useful in this study of Australian girls' literature to enter the ongoing debate in regard to the legend (or otherwise) of the
nineties, except to note that all sides have effectively excluded Turner's literary contribution to an Australian cultural identity. Those who had found her books important would appear to have forgotten their influence, and printed comments like Nettie Palmer's were very rare. Turner's particularly feminine and family-centered image of Australian life, readily accepted and well-received by the reading public and critics of the 1890's, is evidence enough today that, "the variety of Australian nineties' writing has been underestimated." Leon Cantrell in recognising that fact, nevertheless did not find a place for Turner's work in his anthology, probably because her work did not exhibit a sense of alienation and loss, the "principal literary hallmark" of the 1890's. John Docker, in suggesting to Cantrell what his anthology should have contained, mentions Seven Little Australians briefly, somewhat overshadowed by his consideration of My Brilliant Career. That perhaps is some indication of the achievement of Seven Little Australians, in that it is the only children's book to gain even that crumb of recognition in the nineties debate. Seven Little Australians of course was published some years prior to My Brilliant Career and was a novel about urban life, or more accurately suburban life, as Captain Woolcot preferred to keep his unruly children somewhat removed from the gaze of his fellow officers, and more importantly, even although it
was about an independent, vigorous and individualistic girl, it did not shock or upset anybody.

A sympathetic picture of Judy as a young woman would have upset many people. Judy's fate is evidence that the much vaunted 'freedom' of Australian girls was a matter of manners, dress and physical activity. Girls were expected to express opinions, to select their own lovers, to go largely unchaperoned, to play sport, to not rely on domestic help, to be educated (even, perhaps matriculate to the University) and to enjoy outdoor life in preference to the drawing room. They were not expected to take this freedom as a rejection of homelife; and in the 1890's that is what a career outside the home implied, in spite of numerous examples of women combining a family and a profession.40 Patricia Grimshaw, in challenging Miriam Dixson's contention that the circumstances of early Australian life sowed the seeds of present day discrimination, explored the ironies of the Australian woman's position.

The evidence does not sustain an interpretation of pioneering experience in Australia, whether in the bush or the towns of the colonies, as one which led to a worsening of the status of women in relationship to the male sex. The Australian girl, in particular, was characterised by the 1880's in remarkably similar style to girls in other pioneering societies, as confident, open, independent, friendly...There is...a highly significant indicator to substantiate the view that women's experience of colonial society was
conducive to a fair degree of sexual equality within the family, and that is the remarkably widespread acceptance of feminist ideas and feminist reform at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.41

Grimshaw goes on to argue that it was "the early and widespread adoption" of modern ideologies of family life in Australia which,

while initially implying an enhanced status for the wife and mother within the family, and offering an often comfortable and personally satisfying life style for many, nevertheless set sharp limits to women's participation in the public sphere, and hence to the full realisation of women's human potential.42

The Australian ideal of the colonial girl persisted like the dreams of an egalitarian society, despite all the evidence to the contrary. Generally the Australian girl did lead a much less constrained life than her British sister, but as an adult her options were limited.

The central paradox of girls' fiction, the creation of lively rebellious heroines and then the need to censure them, is all the more noticeable in Australian girls' fiction because of the character's special childhood freedoms. The recurring theme of the freedom of colonial girls was used in an interesting way in British girls' books, and the following example from Angela Brazil's The School By the Sea(1914) is typical of the somewhat patronising manner of the
British stance.

'Do you find Colonial girls much quicker than English?' asked Jessie. 'They are more resourceful, and very bright in suggesting fresh ideas, but they are not so willing to submit to discipline. They are more ready to copy a corps of rough-riders than a Roman cohort. No doubt it is owing to the way they are brought up. Very few of them spend their early life in the charge of nurses and governesses. From babyhood they are taught to take care of themselves, to be prepared for emergencies, and to throw up whatever they may have in hand and go to the assistance of a neighbour who needs them. It is a training that makes them helpful and energetic, but perhaps a little too independent to accord entirely with the standards we keep at home. Our girls are more sheltered and guarded and it is only natural that they should have a different style from those who must hold their own.'

The tone of British girls' books suggests that whereas colonial girls, Australians and Canadians, might be active, brave and resourceful, their type of upbringing just would not 'do' for an English girl: that the English girl was the fortunate inhabitant of a more refined culture. Turner's humourous and gleeful reiteration of this somewhat sacred belief in the opening pages of Seven Little Australians would probably not have endeared her to some British readers, particularly adults; whereas it most certainly had appealed to Australians.

It is clear from Seven Little Australians that Turner was greatly attracted to independent, vigorous girls (she was one herself) yet could not reconcile the needs of such a girl with what she also saw as a
needs of such a girl with what she also saw as a worthwhile and socially sanctioned domestic role.

Several entries in her diary indicate that the choice, as Turner saw it, between domestic life, "Love", and a career, "Fame", posed quite a dilemma.

I do want Fame - plenty of it. If a fairy came and offered me Love or Fame, of course I should choose Love. No, I don't see why I shouldn't have both. I don't want to be married though for a long, long time, a little time ago I thought I did but I want to have a tilt with Fame first. Conceited little ape, you want your ears boxing.

Oh, there isn't anything like Love. Fame would be a Dead Sea apple if one hadn't love too, I don't know how I could have thought that Fame might be almost as satisfying, why I believe why I want it chiefly is just to make him [Herbert Curlewis] more proud of me.44

It is a problem Turner was to tackle again and again in future books. Brenda Niall has noted amusingly,

If she had thought of the problems of a sequel without Judy, Ethel Turner might have been tempted to let that falling tree come down less heavily...45

However, sequels with Judy would have caused more problems. *Judy and Punch* (1928), Turner's last book, in which she revives and expands the incident from *Seven Little Australians* of Judy's internment in boarding-school as a punishment by Captain Woolcot, gives Turner the opportunity to reflect further on how Judy could best have been guided and, through the portrait of the school-mistress Miss Flora Burton, how she might have grown-up. Boarding-school provides the "guiding-hand" that the Captain had been at a loss to provide, and
more closely mirrors the environment in which Ethelred May, Jo March and Katy Carr learn to curb their spirits. However, being a school, not a family home, Judy's energies are channelled into scholarly pursuits.

Judy should have been brought up with men dreaming of building flying machines, telephones, cables, machinery, or with artists, sculptors or writers from whom she could catch the fire necessary to discipline herself to the long patience of steady effort.

Nearly all the mischievous escapades of her early childhood were due to the overcharge of power stored within her and given no outlet of escape.46 Turner had obviously considered closely Judy's possibilities as an adult. In the chapter "A Spring Birthday", when Judy accompanies Miss Flora on her annual birthday "rampage" - a long hike through the mountains - the similarities between Miss Flora and Judy, obvious from the time of their first meeting, are spelled out. The chapter is worth quoting at length, for it provides an answer to those who regretted Judy's death in Seven Little Australians. It also can be read as Turner reassuring herself, at this late stage in her career, that she had 'done right' by Judy.

'All teachers ought to be allowed to run amuck once in a way. Or at least stand at the top of a cliff and halloo for an hour.'
'What perfect little beasts we must be!' said Judy.
'Oh, so so, so so. Not blaming anyone,' said Miss Flora, 'and I don't think all teachers feel like this-I don't think my sisters do. Just square peg and round hole with me.'
'You ought to have been a--a----' said Judy, and then paused heavily. Who could say what she ought to have been, this lanky woman with the kindling brown eyes and the colourless hair straggling about her face in untidy wisps?
'A—what?' said Miss Flora bluntly. 'Try to tell me.'

Judy had to think hard...'Perhaps you could have painted,' she said. 'Oh, I don't mean miserable little flowers and things. But splendid pictures of battle like that Lady Butler's 'Roll Call' in the Art Gallery. Or lions and tigers pacing madly in dens. Or frightful storms at sea.'

'Um,' said Flora. 'Odd child. I had notions of doing that kind of thing once.' She stared at Judy...

'Or books,' she said. 'Yes, you could have written books. Ghost stories or pirate ones to make people's hair stand on end...

'Very odd child!' said Flora. 'I once got half-way through writing such a tale!... 'What do you intend to do yourself, young woman?' Miss Flora said curiously.

'I'm not quite sure,' Judy said. 'Sometimes I think to be a jockey would be the best, and go flying madly round racecourses whipping your horse. Or captain of a lot of Arabs and lead them against Sheikhs from other parts, all mounted on camels and have skirmishes in the desert. But the dream I have oftenest is that I'm flying.'

'Everyone has their flying dreams,' murmured Miss Flora...

'I had a father and mother after the manner of the rest of the world,' Miss Flora said. 'Four of us there were, all daughters. Father let Mother bring three of us up just as the rest of the world is brought up, but when I came along he asserted himself and brought me up after some of his own ideas. I learned what I liked and when I liked. I dressed as I liked and said what I liked. He held that it was the only way to get an original piece of human nature; and said he was sick to death of seeing a million girls all cut out from the same patterns...

'What a lark,' said Judy. 'Oh, you must have enjoyed yourself!'  

'I wonder!' said Miss Flora,...'It's dangerous work making untried experiments on human beings,' she said. 'You see, no one can live to themselves—my father forgot that. With the world constituted as it is, we all have to be licked into shape with somewhat the same sort of discipline or we should find it simply impossible to live with each other...For years I was for ever flying off at tangents, trying new professions, new ways of living, but in the end I always drifted back here...

So this was the secret of the queerness of Miss Flora! And how sporting of her to tell it! Dimly
she apprehended that there was a moral in it all for herself did she care to apply it—that Miss Flora had imagined she recognised a kinship between them. But as if she, Judy, could ever become like this lank figure now striding along a little ahead! She felt no kinship herself, only an immense understanding and sympathy and liking for the woman. The only kinship she herself felt was one with the keen spring wind, with the red tips of the gum trees, the young eagle flying overhead and the red flame of colour behind the camel's hump. (pp92-97)

Judy was the creation of a very young, confident and talented writer who, when writing her first book, had not yet come up against the requirements of publishers, or the strictures of reviewers and the public. Turner's vision of a genial readership enjoying her subversion of stock situations in children's books would, after the publication of Seven Little Australians, have been joined by a group of grim-faced watchers:

In the next edition Miss Turner should excise 'my oath' from Pip's vocabulary. It occurs but once, which is once too often.47

Turner's "objectionable phrases"48 and her tendency to stray into areas considered unsuitable for inclusion in juvenile fiction provoked numerous conflicts with her publishers. Mr Steele, under pressure from "the House" in London to bring the intractable Miss Turner to heel, sent Turner evidence of the need both to stay with children's literature and to avoid offending "the
goody-goody people".49

By this post I send you a copy of Women Writers, the last chapter of which is Louisa May Alcott, and I think some of her experiences may afford you food for reflection and assist you to decide for yourself, as to your chances for success in literature, outside what are known as young people's books.50

Steele promptly forwarded a copy of a letter sent to him from a Dunedin bookseller:

I think you should know that one of my friends lately told me that on looking through a book by Miss Ethel Turner which had been given to a child of his he was shocked to find such language in it as led him to tear it up leaf by leaf and burn it and forbid any books by the same author to enter the house again. It is surely a pity that having made a name for writing pure stories of Australian child-life Miss Turner should spoil herself by an unnecessary realism. My friend contrasted her work with that of Ralph Connor whose 'Black Rock' and 'Sky Pilot' depict a far rougher style of life than any Miss Turner portrays and who yet writes so purely that his books may safely be put into the hands of the most innocent.51

Mr Steele tried very hard to convince Turner that she would be best off placing all her trust in Ward, Lock. He ended one letter by quoting another Ward, Lock author's "dedication to his publisher".

As an expression of gratitude
For the many personal kindnesses shown me,
As an evidence of an author's appreciation of
This publisher's courteous
And fair treatment,
And as a token
of a friendly relationship which I
Trust may long continue
I Dedicate this book to James Bowden.52

There were certainly problems for Turner in having a London publisher with one eye on their English sales and another on their reputation as publishers of Mrs Beeton's Cookery Book and the Bible! It was some years
before Ward, Lock realised that *Seven Little Australians*’ success depended almost wholly on the attraction of its convincing picture of Australian life to Australians 53 and relinquished their demand that "the English people must be reckoned with".54 However, these pressures to somewhat alter her approach in writing about Australia and Australians were not without effect. There was never to be another character quite like Judy, whose daring and unpredictable nature could lead to difficulties. The careless confidence that had lead to her creation was gone. Turner would have felt justified in killing Judy when confronted with the extraordinary sensitivity of her public after the publication of her first few books. She had seen the difficulties of developing Judy further; being accused of offensive language had probably not been a part of her wildest dreams! Later Turner heroines, Bobbie Lennox, Nicola Silver, Jennifer J. and Flower are more manageable heroines, still independent and vigorous, but tending to follow more closely patterns established by earlier girls’ fiction rather than exploiting those patterns as did Judy. Judy did not rest easy however; in all her subsequent books, Turner returns time and again to consider the options for girls as adults, maintaining a pre-occupation that often overshadowed her depiction of childhood interests and pursuits.
CHAPTER 3  

Fame and Money - Ethel Turner's Later Novels

We are four schoolgirl [sic] who have read all your books, and are most anxious to have your autograph, (4) will you send it to us?...

PS  Please address your answer to -
    Miss M. Fellows
    Echeverria 3083
    Belgrano
    Buenos Aries
    South America

(Letter to Ethel Turner, 20th November, 1908)¹

The new book [The Secret of the Sea] has distinction and individuality things that your firm seems positively afraid of, - I have always urged, but always quite vainly that the perpetual reproducing in uniform series is harmful to a book, and when you bring not only one author out in that series but half a dozen until they all look as much alike as tins of jam, well frankly the prospect is not sufficiently alluring...

I hate, as you know, writing these letters and not doing as you ask, but you will understand that I must be a good business woman just as you are a good business man.

(Ethel Turner to Mr William Steele, 18th October, 1913)²
Following the initial triumph of *Seven Little Australians*, Ethel Turner published four books in the next two years. These books: a sequel to *Seven Little Australians*, *The Family at Misrule*; a novel meant for adults, *The Story of a Baby* (1895); two more children's books - a novel *The Little Larrikin* (1896), as well as a collection of short stories *The Little Duchess* (1896) - consolidated her success and her name became a guarantee of sales. Turner published a further thirty-nine books, twenty-seven of them novels, and wrote hundreds of short stories, articles and poems for journals and newspapers. All of the novels were about family life in Australia, all with a heroine whose age varied from young adolescence to a mature woman with her own children. Turner's most important audience was "her faithful schoolgirl".

If you will get the number of "The Girl's Realm" for March, you will find a report of a competition in which girls selected their favourite heroines from books. Amongst living writers you have come first...I congratulate you most heartily on the high place you take in the voting; the more so because the competition was taken up by an immense number of girls all over the world.

I [J.B. O'Hara, Melbourne schoolmaster and author] am, probably, in a better position than most to know exactly the literary tastes of the young Australian and I scarcely think I have a girl in school who has not read and re-read most of your volumes. Every year, at our annual Speech Night, I give several of your books for prizes and the girls who receive them seem to regard themselves as favoured individuals.
This audience remained unflaggingly faithful despite Turner's excursions into what her publishers feared were 'dangerous waters', and what some reviewers felt was lamentable indecision regarding her 'class' of reader.6 Convinced by the abundant evidence of her success that Ward,Lock needed her more than she needed them, Turner supervised her affairs from a position of strength and firm decision. She wanted increased overseas sales, especially in the United States, and was quick with criticism if she thought there was any backsliding in regard to the promotion of her books in the domestic market.7 This tenacity was not at all appreciated by Ward,Lock or the other publishers she later dealt with. Mr. Steele was always careful in his dealings with Turner, but London recommended the ironfist. Neither approach seemed to have much effect, until Ward,Lock in London made use of the 'tyranny of distance' to alter manuscripts without Turner's permission.

Before sending to the printer MS of NICOLA SILVER, we found it necessary to delete the discovery of the heroine's half sister, because it turned upon marital unfaithfulness and divorce, subjects which, by general consent are absolutely banned from discussion in books for the young...If it had been possible to consult you in time, we would have done so, but we feel sure you will see that our action was in your interest no less than in our own.8

Although publicly maintaining an absolute conviction in the worth of her work, privately Turner often castigated herself for pot-boiling and
carelessness. She felt that to be a real 'Artist' she had to write for adults as well as for children. In her own eyes, and certainly from the viewpoint of the public, children's literature was a lesser type of writing - entertaining, of some importance, but not Art. Although the Bulletin consistently praised Turner and placed her work "in a higher class" than other juvenile fiction - early on even placing her above adult writers like Lawson - they maintained a conviction that Turner's "chief literary characteristic will prove to be, not power, but charm."9 In the main, it was Turner's portraits of children at play that were found charming. If the status of children's fiction had been higher during her career, the sort of writing like the following extract from her short story "The Camp at Wandinong" might have been appreciated for more than its charm. Dorrie and her brother Bert are playing at being the Kelly gang:

'I'll be Dan and police constable as well-that'll be great. When I jam my hat down like this, I'm Dan sticking banks up with you, and collaring all the gold and things; and when I let it hang off by the strings, I'm the mounted policeman running you down.'

'But don't go and sud'ny change when you're close up to me,' requested Bert.

He vaulted on a big stick, and galloped madly off into the bush tangle that fringed the cleared plain...

'...I can't hold his head much longer,' he said, struggling with the restive creature. 'He's smelt powder. He wants to plunge at 'em.'

'It's as I thought,' [Dorrie] whispered excitedly; 'they're waiting for us. Forty men there are, armed to the teeth, and five women with revolvers
in their hands as well. Well, I guess we're equal to them.'...For the next five minutes two mad little figures were rushing about round the tree, hitting wildly at it with their one-time horses, now turned into weapons of defence...

'we may as well fire the place now,' Ned said, piling up brushwood.

But Dan had slipped away. And Bert, glancing round to see where and why, found Dorrie bearing down upon him in a straight line.

'Where've you been?' he said, entirely forgetting her dual character.

Then he noticed the peculiar way her hat hung off her head, but the recollection came almost too late.

'Stand and deliver, in the King's name,' said Dorrie in stentorian tones.10

However, Turner was not satisfied to just pursue and develop this sort of writing. A major obstacle to her doing so was the imprecise definition of children's literature at the time. As an innovator in Australian literature, she had no sound advice, guidance or encouragement from her publisher or from reviewers who all shared the general uncertainty about the place of this type of literature.

In scope and treatment [Seven Little Australians] is a little above children, and a little below most grown-ups...11

Ward,Lock was only concerned to observe the proprieties of morals and language, and to maintain a weighty number of words to each volume. While serious reviewers, like those writing for the Bulletin, were concerned that Turner continue writing about things she knew, "you can divide girlish imagination from girlish observation all through the book".12 The two
standpoints were contradictory; it was her "unnecessary realism" that caused so much trouble to her publishers. Turner's earlier books were reviewed as seriously as those of other writers in the 1890's who today, rightly or wrongly, are generally regarded as better, and more influential writers. However, her principal readers were children, and the public had very definite views on the acceptable content of books for the young, even although, as an innovator, Turner had some opportunity to set some definitions of her own for Australian children's literature. The Bulletin contrasting Turner's 'realism' with the romantic aspects of her novels, failed to see in the sentiment an attempt to approach issues that would otherwise have been unacceptable. The way for Turner might have been easier if she had not had to deal with the demands of a London publisher and the taste of an Australian audience.

Turner defended the parts of her novels, firstly The Little Larrikin and later Three Little Maids, that the Bulletin had criticised, claiming they were taken from life whereas Seven Little Australians had been entirely imaginary, "I am beginning seriously to find my imagination does me better service than my observation". The confusion could not be resolved while Turner continued to write for children.
As the years went by, with constant pressure from her publishers to turn out a novel a year by a certain date to suit the marketing department, Turner did at times write carelessly. As a result her qualms about the lesser value of children's writing became self-fulfilling. She did not sufficiently pursue her talent for writing amusing and vigorous portraits of children's imaginative worlds. Later, in England, Nesbit and A.A. Milne did pursue it and the praise (and the sound of cash registers) have not ceased yet. Accustomed, as well, to being self-supporting and with many charitable calls on her pocket, Turner eventually became unwilling to sacrifice income for the sake of a serious attempt at an adult novel. Possibly she also felt it was a worthless risk. Through the portrait of the young artist Linley in The Little Larrikin, Turner indicates that she was aware from very early in her career of her own limitations.

'The Flight of Little Souls' stood on the largest easel in the studio and in the best light. It was a curiously unequal picture...The whole charm of the picture lay in the children - the little figures in their clinging night-gowns, the small, bare, rosy feet...It was the same with all the canvases in the room. Linley could paint children,...true children, truly painted...But the great ambitious canvases were laughable.

Of her two early adult novels, Tekel was never published and Turner disliked The Story of a Baby. However knowing her own limitations as a writer and the restrictions of her genre, did not ease Turner's frustration, and she continued throughout her career to
test the limits of children's fiction. In *The Little Larrikin* she adopted a formula which allowed her to write about issues that were normally outside of children's fiction but kept her novels within that classification. In *The Little Larrikin*, the exploits of the little larrikin, Lol Carruthers, run concurrently with the adult concerns of his elder brother Roger, and Roger's fiancee, artist Linley Middleton. Turner skilfully contrives to bring the two plots together now and again throughout the novel, but nevertheless the two strands could exist individually, one as a child's tale and the other as a story for adults. The *Bulletin* review of *The Little Larrikin* recognised this division in the novel, maintaining their indecision as to its intended reader and, as they always did, underestimating the literary taste of young adolescent girls.

Like 'The Family at Misrule', 'The Little Larrikin' is a story for big children which grown-ups should read with pleasure, but the author has succeeded less well in uniting the child-interest and the literature-interest.17

This 'tandem' writing characterised the majority of Turner's novels from the turn of the century. It is a compromise that has left an important legacy. In her children's novels Turner has given us a picture of young girls, written from the perspective of urban middle-class life that hitherto was lacking in
Australian literature. In addition, her motivation to write "about children" rather than "for children", adopted as a compromise to her ambition to write for adults, meant that Turner closely examined the role of adult members of the family in her novels. Evidence of this motivation can be found in practically all of her novels and three of them, *Mother's Little Girl* (1904), *Flower o' the Pine* (1914), and *Jennifer J* (1922) will be examined closely here. Although the titles of all three books refer to the major girl character, the focus of these novels is Turner's vigorous pursuit and interest in the prospects of young women, wives and mothers.

*Mother's Little Girl* was a novel that caused some trouble between Ethel Turner and Ward,Lock, due less to its content, than over its length and title. Turner's provisional title was "Renunciation" and she finally decided on "The Gift Impossible". Ward,Lock changed this, without permission, to "Mother's Little Girl", altering Turner's intended emphasis entirely. She was bitterly disappointed by the high-handedness of her publishers.

I never felt so angry - so wildly angry in all my life...wrote a letter demanding that the book be kept back and the title altered to my own. The first copy of the book came and I positively could not look at it under so vulgar and namby-pamby [a] title.21
In Mother's Little Girl, Ellie and Ted Waller are the young parents of six children, Ruth aged nine years, Walter eight, Winnie six, Bonnie three, Brian or 'Byny' fifteen months, and the baby Sylvia. Ellie and Ted are very close and very considerate of each other under remarkably unfavourable circumstances. Ellie is in bed, ill, after the birth of Sylvia, Ted is out of work, and Ruth is trying to run the household with the help (for two weeks) of a nurse on only her second case and Lizzie, a maid-of-all-work in the typical Turner mould, slip-shod and slatternly, who resigns half-way into the third chapter. Byny cuts his head open on an axe, the butcher refuses to supply them any longer, Walter runs away, the baby has much-used clothes to wear, and Ted can only get a poorly-paid job as a watchman. Turner's portraits of family life are not of a stable and safe refuge, but of a family life which is precarious, depending for existence on a few shillings, the good nature of the milkman and the health of mother. Things can so easily go wrong and it is women who generally hold the family together. Turner used her talent at describing appalling home conditions to good effect, and many a reader must have longed for someone to come along to save families from what seemed an endless procession of meals of fatty mutton and
mealy potatoes.

He took [his dinner], swimming in liquor, fat encrusted. Clem pushed the potatoes to him, Phil poured out his tea. He ate with a face gloomier even than Ruffy's. Lol came in and mixed himself a plate of potatoes and sugar—he ate sugar to almost everything...In the midst of the second course—bread and peach jam—Phil gave a short laugh. 'We're a bright lot, ain't we?' he said. 'Talk about the convivial board!' (The Little Larrikin, p181)

The picture of family life in Mother's Little Girl is no less horrifying.

Here that same crown, ['the shining crown of motherhood'] six times pressed down on the yet young forehead within nine years, had turned from gold to thorns. (Mother's Little Girl, p21)

In the midst of their financial crisis, a cheque for one hundred pounds arrives from Ellie's wealthy sister Alice who offers to adopt Sylvia. Ted angrily tears the cheque to pieces, but when Ellie falls seriously ill they finally decide to give the baby to Alice. Ironically, soon after this decision is made, the family fortunes improve. Ted gets a good job and Ellie recovers. She is determined to find them a better place to live and buys a suburban block of land on which their house is soon built. Turner then, just as successfully, draws a picture of domestic comfort which negates the image drawn earlier of Ellie's experience of motherhood.

Ellice is the heroine of the book, Ruth's burdens as the eldest daughter, and Sylvia's babyhood as a
much-loved and indulged child on Alice's Queensland property, occupy a secondary role. Ellie is not the shadowy tea-making mother characteristic of so many children's books, rather Ellice and Ted are considered in many roles; as parents, in their relationship to each other as lovers, and in their dealings with society. In this book Turner examines the choices for women apart from marriage and children. Set against Ellice's experience is that of her sister, married to a rich grazier and childless, and the life of Ada Gilbert, an unmarried, wealthy woman of thirty-four.

...'Look at you; you've got brains and good looks, and you've not lost the power of enjoying yourself, and here you stick, year after year, worrying after half a dozen youngsters who would be just as happy in a sausage machine if they had never been shown another sort of life.'

'But what should I do if I didn't stick here?' asked Ellie.

'Oh,'—vaguely—'go about the world and enjoy yourself.'

'As you do?' said Ellie keenly.
The girl burst into a sudden passion of tears, to the startled dismay of her hostess.

'Oh, if you knew how wretched I am!' she said. (Mother's Little Girl, p140)

Ada is wretched because, even although she does not like children, and is not particularly attracted to any man, she can see no rewards in remaining single. Ellie tries to convince her otherwise.

'Well, I repeat, a woman wants to settle down, and have a roof that is not her father's over her head.'

'She can have that without a husband,' said Ellie, 'some of the brightest, sunniest-natured women I know are unmarried and working for themselves, and they look, I know, with actual pity on a woman like myself, toiling along with a family.' (Mother's Little Girl, p151)
Ellie's advice to Ada on how she can productively fill her time would not have tempted anyone to prefer life as a single woman.

'Get an object-do some work. There is no tonic in life like hard, purposeful work.'
'And be told I am depriving some girl who has to work for her bread of a position,' said Ada.
'Oh, work does not only mean type-writing or teaching,' said Ellie...'Divide up your life into four parts,' she said, 'give one part wholeheartedly to your home. And that includes fitting yourself right into your father's life, and making yourself indispensable to him...'...'Help the poor...next you are to take up some branch of study that appeals to you, and work hard at it. Where has your music gone?...For play you may take to photography...'(Mother's Little Girl, pp156-59)

Turner is obviously at a loss regarding Ada's future, and in this and other books her dissatisfaction with certain aspects of women's place and roles is worked out to a not entirely satisfactory answer - 'honest toil'. Turner offered this solution for Linley's unhappy sister Marcia in The Little Larrikin.

If I were the Creator I would give her a six-roomed house, a general servant and half a dozen children, boys, chiefly, with the element of devildom in them; she would work out her own salvation and make Barrett [her husband] a happy man.(The Little Larrikin, p320)

Turner examines this issue in regard to a younger woman, who has the advantages of education, in Flower o' the Pine. This was the fourth book Turner sent to Hodder and Stoughton, because of the various disagreements she was having with Ward,Lock, not least of which concerned her wish to write "about" children.
Niall claims that,

With these four novels [Fair Ines (1910), The Apple of Happiness (1911), The Secret of the Sea (1913), and Flower o' the Pine] Ethel Turner tried a new policy: that of distinguishing between what she called her 'young' stories, as she described The Apple of Happiness and Flower o' the Pine, from those which like Fair Ines and The Secret of the Sea might appeal to adults as well as children... Flower o' the Pine returned to safe territory...

However, despite the centrality of Flower, a character unmistakably derived from Pollyanna (1913), a major part of the plot involves nineteen-year-old Elizabeth's determination to complete her University career in the face of family opposition. Flower Hume is coming from the heat of Reedy River in Queensland to stay with her Aunt and Uncle Hume in Manly and regain her health. Twelve years before, her father, Gordon Hume, had become besotted with the family governess, run away with her and had forgotten to pay the insurance on the family warehouse. The warehouse burned down and a fortune in wool was lost. Gordon and his wife Alice exiled themselves to Reedy River, and the brothers no longer communicated. Flower is coming to Manly only because the two Mrs Humes stood-up, for once, against their feuding husbands - Mrs Alice Hume had already lost one child in the uncongenial climate of Reedy River. The Manly Hume family is living in a mansion and pretending to a lifestyle above their means. Elizabeth, the daughter, confronts her weak, beaten-
down mother with the facts of their decrepit lives.

'Elizabeth! Fortunes are not lost and made again in a year or two. Strong man as your father is, he has never been able to recover.'
'Strong man as my father is! He is the weakest man I ever knew or even dreamed of. He is childishly weak, pitiably weak.'...
'Do you think he deceives anyone? When he was ruined why didn't he accept the situation boldly, and fight his way out of it? Why didn't he sell this hateful house, and do something with the money he had left? We might have been quite happy, all of us, even if we had only had eight or nine rooms and no portico. What does he do? Pretends to be quite rich yet, won't give up his big house; makes us dress for dinner even if we have hardly a rag of other clothes left in our wardrobe. Keeps the hall and the drawing-room and as far as the front gate presentable, and lets everything else drop to pieces.' (Flower o' the Pine, pp31-32)

The no-holds-barred approach of these chapters: outlining the tensions between Mrs Hume, who spends everyday at home reading library books, dressed in clothes twelve years out-of-date and too ashamed to be seen; Mr Hume obsessed with hatred for his brother and the need to pretend the loss means little; and Elizabeth embittered by her family's opposition to her entering University, and her subsequent struggle to put herself through; contrast markedly with the portrait of Flower.

When God lets slip down to the earth for a little time one of the dearest of the sunbeams that warm and play around the throne, His eye is watching it all the time-all the time. (Flower o' the Pine, p62)

Turner may well have intended to write a children's book, but the seemingly serious purpose and
energy put into what would have been considered adult issues at the time, belie her intention. Whether or not Turner supports Elizabeth's actions and her defiance of her father, is somewhat difficult to determine. When Dennis, Elizabeth's twin brother, is confronted by the "bald account" that his lecture fees and expenses are "set down and acknowledged, Elizabeth's ignored" in the family accounts, he first is upset by the "inequality of things", and then angered that his sister should cause this much trouble.

Why had she taken this bee in her bonnet that she must go to the University too? And at this very same hard-pressed period? Why, instead of turning into this sombre-eyed, bitter-speaking young person, could she not be like so many of the pleasant girls he knew in Manly, laughing careless creatures, asking nothing better than the sunlight and the surf, and tennis, and dances, and men's attentions?...

She met his glance of impatience. She curled her lip.

'Yes,' she said, 'it's a sweet thing, isn't it, to be born a woman? Masculine son, six pounds a month. Feminine daughter, three pounds six. That's the sort of handicap right through life.' (Flower o' the Pine, p102)

Elizabeth passes brilliantly, but her achievement counts as nothing compared to the sacrifice of Dennis, who fails his exams due to his secretly working to keep the family going. Dennis appears to be the favoured character, and his criticisms of Elizabeth seem to reflect Turner's attitude. Whereas Elizabeth's struggles are to be pitied she is nevertheless bringing trouble on herself, reaching after unsuitable and
perhaps unattainable goals.

'...Intellect in women! Bah! There isn't such a thing. You sweat and swot, you women over there, and ruin your looks and your health and your tempers for life, just to pass an exam or two that a man takes without turning a hair.' (Flower o' the Pine, pp126-27)

Turner acknowledges the anguish but, in the end considers that it is better to be flexible and go with common opinion, particularly as one day Elizabeth will gain her degree - and then what? Turner has no answers.

All the exhilaration of her success had departed from her. There are some things, Dennis has said, that can be too dearly bought. Had the price she had paid been heavier than the thing was worth? What was it that she was bearing home to her mother to-day? (Flower o' the Pine, pp210-11)

Elizabeth who has become "cold, silent..." due to the strain of study, finds salvation in housework when Yoshida, their Japanese servant, is thought to have run away with the remains of the family fortune.

Elizabeth was facing problems compared with which her examinations were child's play. (Flower o' the Pine, p228)

Her energy would be better used, it is implied, making "ugly things pretty" as Flower's mother has told her is a woman's main task.

Turner's preoccupation with how women can live useful and fulfilling lives reflects doubts she held about the purpose of her own life. She was never satisfied with her own success, even although she was probably one of a handful of Australian writers to make
a good living from their writing. She wrote frankly about her disappointment to her friend, the poet Dowell O'Reilly, who she felt shared the frustrations of not being able to write one's great work.

Life gets so 'cluttered up'; one realises that there are beautiful things about, sunrises and starshine and friendships and such and that without them life would be - well, just life. And yet one lets them be pushed out of sight by things that really can be of no importance at all in the scheme of things. Ah well, - some-day one will draw a deep breath, and see life straight and do the something in us that cries to be done. - Never think that flagrant pile of rubbish books lying about this continent is in the least my 'something': they have just been bread and butter - (no, say marmalade and apple jelly, - the Man's is the bread and butter) just as were your school teaching days. So here we both stand, late but not too late, eaten by the same desire, - what you call 'the longing to set free the something in one.'

Ethel Turner achieved at least part of that "something" through her involvement in social work. Poverty and suffering distressed her deeply, but she was no idealist and her answer to alleviate suffering was practical help and money. In William Lane's *Workingman's Paradise* (1892), the hero Ned asks "What is socialism?". By way of answer the heroine, Nellie, kisses a homeless prostitute sleeping in the Domain. Michael Wilding in his Introduction to the facsimile edition quotes a reaction to this scene,

'Ahh! Will,' said Rae, 'You didn't complete the picture. When the prostitute woke up she wouldn't know that she had been kissed by a girl. Nellie should have left half a crown in her hand - that would have been practical socialism!'
Ethel Turner would have given the half a crown. She might have objected to being called a socialist, but nevertheless the term "practical socialism" does describe her creed. Her need always to seek additional income was prompted by her charitable commitments. When approaching the Sun Newspaper Company in 1919 with a proposal for a child's newspaper, her major reason for wanting this extra work was stated succinctly as "Money".

I do not need more bread and butter to eat, myself, but I see so much of the seamy side of life that I am ambitious for a gold mine into which I may dip.25

The outbreak of war in 1913 meant for Turner a renewed sense of purpose, and the opportunity to combine war work with her novels. This was an enormous impetus to her work at a time when her writing had suffered after years of trouble with her publishers, new and old. "The brutal violence of this sudden jolt in our smooth and prosperous road", she wrote in an 1914 article "Women and Wartime", "had flung us clean back into our genuine selves."26 She went back to Ward, Lock in November 1914 with her war novel The Cub.

Anything that is not book, and is not war orphans or Red Cross work I must let alone till later.27 To that list could be added her temperance work and a number of articles to newspapers on the war effort. Hers was a sane and sober voice at a time of national
hysteria. She pointed out that "We are not at war with Germany. We are at war with the military caste of Germany" and pleaded for restraint, reminding that "Victory means bitter misery for both sides". She supported temperance campaigns ("Rightly or wrongly I am warm over this drink question"), as well as the call for conscription. All of these concerns formed part of her war novels, but as well, her questioning of the proper role for women had added focus during these years, and the conditions of war fortified her conviction that women must find important and satisfying work and not be idle. A wealthy woman, Mrs Lindsay, who is converted to a useful way of life in Captain Cub explains,

...the reason we so often become trivial-minded creatures, we women, after we have finished bringing up our families, is that we never get the chance to empty more than half of the energies that we possess.

In confronting this issue Turner tended to ally herself with the women making a "desperate effort to kill time". Of course she wasn't idle, neither during nor before the war, and neither did she follow the prescription for happiness as set out in The Little Larrikin. She had only two children, Jean and Adrian, and lived in a roomy and elegant home in Mosman. Her life was quite different to that of the precarious shilling-counting existence of many of her fictional families in which a mere two offspring was something of
a rarity. Rather than taking her own achievements and experience - as a professional writer, business woman, wife and mother - as a model for her fictional characters, she tended to show ambitious women and girls as falling short of their somewhat hazy objectives. In The Little Larrikin which Turner claimed was based on her own courtship with Herbert Curlewis,32 she is selective in regard to the "threads" of reality her books contained.33 How Mr Cope, Ethel's difficult and bad-tempered step-father, is metamorphosized into the generous and kindly Robert Barrett (The Little Larrikin), is an example of how Turner re-modeled characters and situations to fit popular taste and expectations. In The Little Larrikin, Robert, Linley's brother-in-law and a father-figure, feels it necessary to assert himself somewhat over the question of Linley's marriage and does perform, briefly, a creditable imitation of an angry stage-father. However, upbraided by Linley, he calls Roger back, Roger went back to the library amused and touched by the real kindliness of the man, but with a face as grave as a judge. Robert met him half-way across the floor with his hand outstretched. 'I've been thinking it over,' he said, with great warmth in his handshake, voice and eyes. 'After all, Linley's happiness is the first consideration. And riches are not everything. You have my fullest consent and approval and most hearty wishes for your happiness.' (The Little Larrikin, p136)

Mr Cope's furious and very odd reaction to Ethel's engagement and marriage is safely whitewashed with a joking gesture towards the irascible and over-
protective father of popular theatre. It is apparent that she was reluctant to include autobiographical details that did not readily fit popularly acceptable notions of behaviour, and either substituted stock literary characters or emphasised sentimental and romantic aspects of a situation.

This technique is duplicated in regard to girls and women characters who touch aspects of Turner's life. In The Little Larrikin, Linley, like Turner, is talented and has early success in her career. She, too, comes to realise her talent lies in a depiction of childhood, and is torn between marriage and the attractions of a successful career. However, the differences in emphasis between Ethel's experience and Linley's are significant. Turner was far more successful as a writer prior to her marriage than Linley is as a painter. According to her diaries Turner was simultaneously writing short stories and trying to write another novel, as well as dealing with publishers and making wedding arrangements. Although very excited about the coming wedding, Turner did not contemplate giving-up her writing. Rather the time spent searching for a house and furnishings and the subsequent detriment to her writing prompted her not to abandon writing, but to make arrangements so that
domestic duties and writing could co-exist.

Started Chapter 3, The Camp at Wandinong, but had to hunt after a stupid servant so much, I could hardly do anything. Domestic routine would kill inspiration, I'll have to get a capable servant if I am to do anything in days to come.34

Linley and Roger decide to marry and the latter chapters of The Little Larrikin are given over to romance, and one can only presume Linley continues painting seriously after her marriage. Turner's busy life as a writer, coloured somewhat by her forthcoming marriage, is changed in The Little Larrikin into a romantic fairytale.

Turner was often the subject of magazine articles, and the transformation journalists achieve in turning a hard-working writer into some sort of fairy godmother reflect the difficulties she would have faced in portraying, truthfully, the possibilities for ambitious and talented girls. Turner's physical appearance was a major set-back to any rational estimation of her writing career. She was very tiny (under five foot), had pale curly hair, blue eyes and a slight lisp. This frail appearance lead one male reporter to enthuse "It is good for a man to talk with Ethel Turner."

...the graceful modesty with which she speaks of her achievements as a writer, tell you that you have before you not any, 'pushful' Marie Corelli, but a clever, refined little woman who is as good as she is versatile.35

It was a rare article that recognised her professionalism and hard work - no wonder that as early
as 1899 Turner declared she was "so tired of writing children's books". Journalists were principally intrigued by Turner's dual role as a writer and mother. She brought some of this on herself by sometimes discounting the hard hours of writing and, often jokingly, pointing out she had other responsibilities as well.

...I have the ship of my house to steer, of course, and that takes a little time! I believe all women authors are quite good housekeepers, Dickens forced us to be so. We dare not run the risk of being called Mrs Jellaby you see.

Turner probably did not see the irony of attributing so much influence to a work of fiction, and she did not redress the image of a crusading woman writer in her own books. Instead she acknowledged the frustrations of home-life for women, but did not countenance any abandonment of 'duty'.

Lots of things there were - it is astounding the numbers of things that have to be done by women's hands to keep a hearty, healthy, fairly well-to-do family up to the mark the world expects of it. (Jennifer J, p61)

In Jennifer J, the Firth family, seven children and Mr Firth, are left to fend for themselves while the mother, Fidelia, returns to Oxford to complete her degree. Their Aunt Amy attempts to fill the mother's shoes, but is quickly disillusioned by the thanklessness of household drudgery, and the lack of response from the family when she tells them of her
efforts on their behalf:

...the family grew bewildered about being told of the deeds so often; they had never heard a word about them from Fidelia, the things were simply done and that was all there was to the matter. Then everyone of them began to say, 'Thanks frightfully, Aunt A.', automatically the moment she began to tell them what she had done. She noticed it silently after a time. (Jennifer J, p61)

Mr Firth suffers from Fidelia's absence, less because he is in need of a wife, but because he requires mothering. He is,

...despite his heavy burden of fifty years, a mere boy yet - in lots of things no older than [his sons]; that he had urgent need of playing yet and being played with, in the moments when he was not furiously busy, and that he had no one to play with him. (Jennifer J, p33)

With such a family, Fidelia's need to escape to England seems very justifiable, but her absence places a heavy burden on her younger daughter Jennifer, who worries about domestic matters while her brothers, sisters and father are involved almost entirely in their own artistic concerns. All of the others like to write but Jennifer is more interested in people - a comparison suggesting that writers are remote from life. Apart from Fidelia's quest, there are a number of (often contradictory) comments made about writing as a profession. The most interesting is the incident of the Munro's. Charlotte Munro is a popular novelist, whilst her brother Stephen has wanted success as a writer all his life (his books are not widely read
although well received by "the reviewers that counted"). When they come to Australia for a holiday, Stephen is presumed to be the famous Chester Munro, and Charlotte the less known writer living off his earnings. In any case, Charlotte deprecates her own efforts by comparison to Stephen's, which she regards as more important. Although this is a small incident in the novel, it is another link between Turner's attitude towards her writing, her notions of domestic life, and also fits the general pattern of womanly sacrifice evident in most of her books.

Back in Oxford, Fidelia fails her exams and she attempts to walk off her disappointment accompanied by a New Zealand woman, Miss Blackstone, who has passed her examinations brilliantly.

The student who had failed was a slender, tall, graceful woman with brown hair passed round her head in a heavy plait, and greying at the temples. The student who had passed was square figured, with a blunt face lighted by a pair of steel-gray piercing eyes. (Jennifer J, p214)

Miss Blackstone ("Whose blunt-faced and homely figure, in denying the flower-strewn by-paths of love to her, had sent her along the stern highway of life where truth stalks unclothed") tells Fidelia,

'...For me, I'd give all the honours I've ever had or am likely to have for a husband and a child of my own.' (Jennifer J, p218)
Fidelia is convinced she is, after all, the lucky one and that her disappointment with domestic life was just the result of weariness.

'Mothers of seven ought to be carefully let off the chain from time to time, and then probably the cussedness wouldn't ferment to any serious extent.' (Jennifer J, p219)

Turner offers a choice, marriage and children or a single life and a career: marriage and outside work just do not combine in her fictional world. Miss Blackstone is portrayed as a sympathetic and kindly woman but is "condemned to the arid highway of life". Turner is, in the end, in this book unequivocal about which choice of lifestyle is preferable.

Domestic life in Turner's novels is portrayed as being, ultimately, the most satisfying course for a woman to pursue. Although some of her pictures of home-life are possibly the most unflattering ever seen in children's literature, even the most horrendous aspects are solved by a little money and a 'decent' woman's good sense and taste. This conclusion fits Turner's overall social philosophy that if people could be hard-working and live in modest comfort, social ills and dissent would be alleviated. However to bring the novels to these conclusions required a rejection of her heroine's ambitions and difficulties, which Turner did not achieve with much conviction. Sentiment provided a refuge from the hard issues her
preoccupation with the role of Australian girls and women was leading her to - she could not kill-off all her difficult characters as she did Judy - and Turner, from distaste, lack of insight or courage, could not pursue her themes to any logical or satisfying conclusion.

If Turner did regard her literary achievements with some distaste, and privately regretted her inability to write a 'worthwhile' novel, as it does appear she did, then her ambivalent attitude towards girls and women who seek things additional to a domestic role can be understood as more than a reflection of social mores. Turner's dissatisfaction with the way her own career had developed may have influenced her to emphasise the virtues of women's domestic role at the cost of other endeavours, particularly if she thought of the difficulties less comfortably placed girls and women face in pursuing "fame and money". However, not having convinced herself of the rewards of a quiet, comfortable and uneventful life in preference to the anguish of ambition, her novels display all the contradictions of her own uncertainty. Turner's preoccupation with the opportunities and choices available to girls and women, brought some interesting adult issues into her books whilst, ironically, limiting the potential for another Seven Little Australians. Her heroines Jennifer and
Fidelia Firth, Elizabeth and Flower Hume, and Ellie Waller are all conscious attempts to work through this theme, and as a result are less successful creations than the relatively carefree and untrammelled Judy - one at least could imagine Judy doing great things in the future!
"The Australian schoolgirl, with all her free-and-easy manner, and what the Misses Prunes and Prisms would call want of maidenly reserve, could teach your bread-and-butter miss a good many things which would be to her advantage."
Ethel Turner's success influenced others to write children's novels. Two of the most popular writers in the sixteen years before Mary Grant Bruce's books rivalled the fame of Ethel's, were her sister Lilian Turner and a school friend from Sydney Girls' High, Louise Mack. Lilian, like Ethel, was published by Ward, Lock and benefited from advertisements that often borrowed 'press opinions' previously used to advertise Ethel's novels. As a result, Lilian was also often labelled "Miss Alcott's true successor". Mack was less often compared to Ethel possibly because she had a different publisher and because her first children's book was subtitled "A Story of Australian School Girls". The books of the three authors shared common structures and themes. Even although Turner's intention in Seven Little Australians was to make light of many of the predominant themes of British and American family stories, she nevertheless wrote within the tradition established by Yonge's The Daisy Chain and Alcott's Little Women. Mack and Lilian also worked within this tradition - even although Mack's first book had the added dimension of school life and, of the two authors, she diverged most from Ethel's example. Lilian Turner and Louise Mack both concentrated on the theme of the independent girl, often talented and
ambitious, who faced difficulties in fulfilling her aims. The persistence of this theme in their girls' books, a theme that Lilian in particular pursued much more rigorously than Ethel, could be viewed as a reflection of some of their own disappointed ambitions.

Louise Mack and Lilian Turner, who both published their first novels in 1896, did not set out to write children's books. Lilian's first book The Lights of Sydney (which won Cassell's 1894 novel-writing competition), and Louise Mack's first book The World is Round, are light romances, not children's books, whereas their second books, Young Love (Turner 1902) and Teens (Mack 1897) are certainly written for children and specifically for girls. Undoubtedly Ethel's success in the field prompted both authors to write children's fiction. However, there is evidence to suggest that the attraction of quick gains from children's fiction, was secondary to the pressure on both authors from the literary fraternity of the 1890's to abandon 'serious' literature. Nancy Phelan, in recalling the reminiscences of her famous literary aunts, Louise and Amy Mack, captures the excitement of the 1890's writing scene, an excitement that was reflected in Ethel Turner's diaries during her first years of success.

When my parents and aunts talked, as they often did, of the old days of literary Sydney they made it sound like the Left Bank, a world of freedom
and poverty, youthful ideals, literature, music
and art. Their reminiscences created a sense of
excitement and wild romance, of everything being
new. Everyone was young and a genius, every work
a masterpiece in that belle époque. To have a
story accepted was wonderful; to publish a book
quite stupendous, especially if you were a pretty
young woman. Our aunt Louise was part of those
days, when Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson were
publishing their first books and writers were
being encouraged to write by J.F. Archibald and
A.G. Stephens at the Bulletin, by George Robertson
at Angus and Robertson and Lord Beauchamp at
Government House.6

Unfortunately for the youthful authors, the novelty of
pretty young women writing books soon wore thin, and
what had seemed to be encouragement and support from
critics like A.G. Stephens proved to be founded on
sentiment and indulgence.

All these women. All these questing minds, all
these passionate hearts. All these girls face to
face with the old wonder of life - and with the
new wonder of themselves - striving unconsciously
to make the old new. All these women endeavouring
consciously to express their fragment of
individuality in terms of the universe.
...most of all they write for an escape - for an
escape from the sordid into the beautiful, from
the reality they have into the dream they
conceive, from the petty aspects of life into the
large vision of the universal mind.

In Australia you can spend a life in listening to
the never-ending chorus...Most are worthless; some
earn praise; some few deserve Australia's pride in
their talents and their accomplishments. But
one's final feeling after the long survey is one
of sympathy and - in all humility - of pity and
compassion.7

This same assessment of women writers is evident in
Stephens' reviews of Mack's The World is Round and
Lilian's The Lights of Sydney. Stephens did not like
Lilian's first novel, and his comments, and Lilian's
subsequent change to children's books, is discussed in
Chapter five. He was in contrast, lavish in his praise of Mack's *The World is Round*, but behind the compliments is the sense of the reviewer's amusement at this young woman writing 'grown-up' books.

Louise Mack is the last of the tribe [that is the 'tribe' of ex-Sydney Girls' High students] to make a curtsey with a little book...That it is clever is undeniable: it shows some insight, and some force, and a fine capacity for plain description and coloured satirical description, and a gimletty faculty of observation which would pierce you through and through though you lived in a Lyrae...8

In this review, Stephens dwells overlong on Mack's appearance, "a small, quaint, frail figure with a soft, round child-face and large blue baby-eyes", lending credence to the claim that he "was sweet on" Louise.9

Although Stephens' was a sympathetic and encouraging voice for Lilian Turner and Louise Mack, his belief that they wrote 'escapist' literature was the sort of judgement that spelt death to a really serious consideration of their work or to any useful fostering of the talent that was evident in their early books. To Stephens' credit, he did identify the best in their novels and urged them to write about what they knew, but in many ways they were writing about what they knew. Stephens did not suggest they delve deeper beyond sentiment to paint family life and the reality of women's lives, rather, his suggestions brought them closer to the example of *Seven Little Australians* and thence to writing for children. Stephen's review of
Teens makes it clear that he regarded children's books as Mack's (and presumably the Turner sister's) proper province.

It is written so well that it could not be written better. The author has taken her own memories, enha...
became less expansive in time — perhaps his editor J.F. Archibald, the chief promoter of Lawson and Paterson and their ilk, had some influence in restraining the praise. In 1897, when a contributor had included Ethel and Louise amongst great Australian novel writers, the Bulletin replied that "Ethel Turner and Louise Mack have doubtfully written 'novels'". The confusion between children's literature and adult literature written by women, discussed earlier in reference to Ethel's difficulties in maintaining a niche in the literary scene, made it easy for Mack and Lilian to drop into the 'no-man's land' of adolescent literature - "flapperature" as the Bulletin derisively termed it.

Outside of the dubious encouragement of Stephens and the Bulletin, Louise Mack had some unpleasant experiences as one of only two women authors in a literary club in the 1890's. Arthur Jose in his reminiscences of the literary groups of the 1890's recalls that Louise Mack,

fresh from a high-school career and the author of a rather clever high-school novel (Teens), while inordinately lauded by the Red Page—it pictured her as a wide-eyed innocent nymph making notes about inferior humans from the steps of a throne, whose not stated—was on the whole taken as a joke by her fellow Boy Authors. I remember one evening when she brought along what in those days might be considered a daring story, which she read, impressively to a silent audience (and that was uncommon at such meetings) right down to its last
climatical word. The silence continued. After moments of embarrassing hesitation, from the back of the little room a voice ...said ghostily, 'O-o-oh, Lou-ee-sa!' Discussion then passed to other subjects.14

John Docker notes that;

The Dawn and Dusk Club and other literary groups could include any number of mediocrities, nonentities and forgettables. Yet Jose in his chapter 'The Feminine Element' also tells the story of how Louise Mack was deliberately humiliated when she tried to have her work heard by, and to gain entry into, one of these male literary circles. Such conscious rejection by men of letters may well point to one reason for some of the intensity and passion of feminist theorists and writers in the period, as with Louisa Lawson.15

Louise Mack's brand of feminism was, in keeping with her flamboyant and unpredictable nature, unique, but her rejection by one particular section of the literary community in the 1890's does appear to have had some influence on the type of book she wrote whilst a young writer in Sydney. It is worth noting that when Mack went to live in England and Europe in 1901 she returned, with one exception, to writing adult books.16

For women writers, the literary climate of the times was more conducive to the writing of children's books, rather than adult literature. Even early in their careers as writers for adults, Louise and Lilian were compared to Ethel and measured against her success. This was prompted by their association with her as friend and sister, but does underline the vagueness of literary definitions at the time, and
anticipated (and influenced) the directions they would take.

They [Ethel Turner and Louise Mack] work on different lines, and rejoice in each other's success, but Miss Turner has always kept slightly ahead, producing children's stories that possess the charm of a delicacy and freshness of style almost unequalled in this class of literature. Miss Mack essays a different role and with a touch of satire criticizes the shams of social life in her short stories and sketches. Three volumes of hers are now in England, being prepared for publication, and when these are in circulation it will be easier for the public to gauge her place in the literary world.17

Similarly, it was impossible for Lilian Turner's work to be assessed without some reference to Ethel's success. The writing of children's books has always been an attractive option for women for many reasons, not least of which is the ready acceptance by publishers and the public of female writers in what could be seen as an extension of a mothering role. Turner's success would have increased the attractiveness of this option for writers eager to publish, to be popular and make money. Children's writing was also an acceptable option for those who might have felt their writing was not first-rate.

Let a woman write to amuse her leisure hours, to instruct her sex, to provide blameless reading for the young, or to boil the pot; moral zeal was an accepted justification and poverty an accepted excuse; but there was one motive which could neither be justified nor excused - ambition, the 'boast' of conscious power, craving to perform its task and receive its reward. The proper attitude for a female was diffidence...18

Although Tompkins is writing here of eighteenth century female novelists, she notes that such views reached
beyond that century. Ethel Turner was diffident about her own abilities and achievement and often compared herself unfavourably with other famous writers - an attitude that possibly influenced the romantic and sentimental aspects of her writing, particularly the portraits she drew of creative women and girls. She had a romantic view of 'the artist' as a person somewhat removed from everyday life which did not correspond with her own experiences as a professional writer and a capable mother and housekeeper. This view of artists as impractical people is a recurring notion in girls' books where the heroine often has aspirations to write or paint. Reconciling this artistic temperament with the practicalities of a woman's homelife results in the prominent theme of giving up 'romance' to accept 'reality'. The Turner sisters and Mack give particular prominence to this theme which, while suggesting they did not see themselves as 'proper' literary artists, also sets up enormous difficulties for their ambitious girl heroines.

When Ethel Turner compares her writing to that of such literary giants as the Brontes, it suggests both her attraction to a romantic view of 'real' writers and the lack, in the 1890's, of a suitable or supportive group of Australian women writers - such as Nettie Palmer gathered around her in
the 1930's - which might have reassured Turner and
others about the worth and validity of their work.19

...At night enjoyed myself vastly with Shorter's
Charlotte Bronte and her Circle. The life of
those three sisters has a strange and intense
fascination for me. How in earnest they were -
they worked with their very heartblood. What a
trifler I seem beside them, nearly everything is
made smooth for me, I've health and happiness and
enough money to keep me from the necessity of pot-
boiling, and I waste my time and work half-
heartedly and grudge trouble very often - I'm not
fit to be trusted with a pen.20

Whether through diffidence, self-consciousness or some
lack of self-confidence - certainly reinforced by the
attitude of the literary clubs of the 1890's and the
inadequate, and ambivalent encouragement of arbitors of
literary taste like the Bulletin - writers such as
Mack and Lilian Turner turned to children's books, and
through these expressed their interest in the roles of,
and opportunities for, Australian girls and women -
somewhat coloured by their own literary experiences.
Ethel's proven popularity and success would have been a
spur to both authors keen to gain some foothold in
Australian literary life.

Judy Woolcot's death is very revealing of the type
of literary pressures and personal convictions which
guided Ethel Turner to create and then destroy a
certain type of heroine. Similarly, Mack and Lilian
Turner are committed to portraying independent and
individualistic girl characters, and a major interest
of their writing lies in, first, how far they
compromise their principal character's individuality in response to social and personal pressures, and secondly whether or not they take up Judy-like characters as representatives of Australian girls, or follow more closely the paradigms established by earlier, overseas girls' literature.
In 1897 Angus and Robertson published their first children's book *Teens* by Louise Mack (1874-1935), followed closely by its sequel *Girls Together* in 1898. *Teens* was a beautifully produced book, imaginatively illustrated by Frank P. Mahony, who is better known today for his illustrations to Ethel Pedley's *Dot and the Kangaroo* (1899). Mack, one of thirteen children, came originally from Tasmania but lived in Sydney as a girl and a young woman. She went to Sydney Girls' High School and edited the school magazine, the *Gazette*. Ethel Turner, at the same time, edited a rival magazine, the *Iris*, begun, it seems, after several articles by Turner were rejected by the *Gazette*. In spite of this rivalry as schoolgirls, Louise and Ethel were friends as young women, particularly during the heady days of the publication of their first books and their respective marriages. From comments in her diary however, Turner did not entirely approve of some of Mack's ideas and attitudes which, it seemed, were somewhat less conservative and guarded than her own.

Talked royalties and publishing and housekeeping. Louie says she hates the latter, that it cramps and cripples her, etc. I'm afraid she is growing inclined to think everything an author does but write is infradig to the author..."
Evening read *A Daughter of Today*. A very good study. *Elfrida* might have been sketched straight from Louie. And I believe, such is Louie's present state of soulfulness and revolt and modernism that if I told her of the resemblance she would be flattered.23

Turner notes several other incidents involving 'Louie' that suggest that Mack had a genius for involving herself in 'scenes'. Mack's first book, *The World is Round*, published shortly after her marriage in 1896 to J. Percy Creed, contained several personal references to Sydney literary people that caused a good deal of embarrassment and resentment.24 In 1899, almost casually, or perhaps in a mood of resignation, Turner records that Louie, "(...jumped off the North Shore boat last night into the harbour and was rescued by a man)"!25 Mack left for England in April 1901 after her marriage to Creed had failed.26 Mack's niece, Nancy Phelan, retained a very exotic image of her aunt, an image that Louise appears to have been keen to foster.

Louise, who went to London before I was born, was a legend, mysterious, wonderful, daring. She was an Authoress. She wrote her first book when she was seventeen; she was the author of *Teens and Girls Together*, still widely read in those days, and countless grown-up novels. She was photographed wrapped in sables, had a flat in the Adelphi, a villa in Italy. She was said to be beautiful, fascinating, terribly brave, and had outwitted the whole German army in occupied Antwerp during The War, where she went as a war correspondent.27

Louise lived and travelled in England and in Europe for many years, writing journalism and novels - mostly light romances similar in nature to *The World is*
Round. E. Morris Miller in summing up Mack's contribution to literature suggests that her writings,

are evidences of a vivacious and ecstatic personality. She knows how to get good colour and atmospheric effects. She revels in the scenic charms of old-world cities and rouses the enthusiasm of her readers. But in spirit she is never absent from Australia. She writes for the moment's delight and apparently presumes that posterity will find other means of escape from tedium.28

After her years in Europe, a middle-aged Louise returned to Australia with her new husband Allen Leyland - still outrageous enough to embarrass her family, insult their friends, and entertain her young nieces. She seems to have lived by the advice she once gave to her niece, "Never worry about what people think!...Experience is what matters."29

Louise Mack's life was not conventional and neither was her first children's book, Teens. It is unique amongst early Australian girls' books in that the author does not attempt to suggest how girls should be and act. Teens is about thirteen-year-old Lennie Leighton's first experience of school. Prior to school, Lennie had been taught at home by a governess, Miss Middleton, along with her three younger sisters, Floss, Mary and Brenda who "wisht...whist" they too could escape to the exotic world of school as painted
by Lennie:

'No more Miss Middleton! No more Philosophe! No more of those silly drawing-copies! No more writing essays, and getting no marks for them! It will be so heavenly to get marks, and to have girls to work against. And to beat them."30

Lennie is confident to the point of brashness. Her belief in what she sees as her own unique and extraordinary gifts is badly shaken when she does not do well in the school entrance examinations. However Lennie does eventually succeed at school and becomes head of the class, winning the first prize in English and History. Together with her friend Mabel (Mab) James, Lennie starts a school paper which is soon challenged by an elegant magazine produced by a senior girl. Undoubtedly the incident, "The War of the Two Pens", refers to the real-life rivalry between Mack and Turner at Sydney Girls' High. Many other incidents in Teens suggests that Mack drew freely from her own experience as a schoolgirl.

There are no particularly adventurous or unusual events in Teens, rather interest is maintained by everyday happenings - Lennie's rather guilty passion for her family of small dolls, the games the Leighton sisters play, reading contraband novels at school, shirking homework, eating toffee and reading stories until it is too dark to see. Mack sets down a number of pictures of school girl life with little exaggeration or authorial intrusion. The effect Mack
achieves in Teens could be likened to Lennie's ability to make common things exciting:

That was a characteristic of Lennie's, the power to excite in others envy of even her commonest, most trivial belongings. If she liked them - and she liked most things that belonged to her - she surrounded them with a halo, and, in a vivid word or two, showed them to onlookers as something superior, or uncommon, or romantic. (p21)

Ethel Turner, on reading several chapters of Teens, found "some of it is good, some seems to trickle in rather a thin stream of school-girl talk". 31

'Isn't it funny,' said Mabel, drawing a long straight line without a ruler, 'that we should both like English best, both be born on the same day, both hate arithmetic, both hate algebra.' She paused for breath. 'Both come to school the same day, both be put in the same class.' 'Both sit next to each other.' 'Both not able to play tennis.' Their voices were rising with the excitement of all these extraordinary coincidences. 'Both,' began Lennie. But she could not think of another. 'Both,' began Mabel. But she too had come to the end of her comparisons. They they began to laugh, and Mabel said frivolously: 'Both have eyelashes on our eyes.' 'Both wear boots.' 'Both wear button-up boots.' They could hardly speak now for laughter. 'Both--wear--h-hats.' 'Both--wear--h-air.' 'B-both---' But their laughter was too much for them, and they rolled from side to side in their seats at each fresh piece of nonsense, and finally dropped their heads on their arms, and rested both on the desks, and lay there in spasms of the most ridiculous laughter. (pp46-47)

The conversation certainly is "thin" and ridiculous - a very accurate reflection of schoolgirl talk. Whether or not she considered such material suitable for
inclusion in a book, Turner, almost ten years out of school, had either forgotten, or wanted to forget how trivial her girlhood conversation would have been.

An unusual aspect of such an early Australian children's book is the lack of outdoors activity:

These children [the Leightons] led a very indoor life. There were few walks within walking distance and the garden in front was narrow and close to the street. (p28)

Only in one of the last chapters, "The Blue Mountains" when the Leighton family has a holiday, are the children in an outdoor setting - a setting at least where Australian flora and fauna can be used to good effect. The more obvious images of Australian life in children's books until the 1890's tend to reflect outside interests; the climate, Sydney Harbour, wattle, gum trees, beaches and space. Even although Ethel Turner adopts urban settings, she uses these images of the outside life to complement and enhance her picture of the relatively carefree and unrestrained life of Australian children. However, Mack conveys an Australian flavour of childhood freedom more subtly through incidents revealing the vulnerability of authority figures such as parents and teachers. Turner uses Captain Woolcot as representative of the supposedly English attitude towards child and adult relationships in order to highlight her contention that Australian children lead less constrained lives. Mack
creates more sympathetic adults who nevertheless are no match for their young charges. A comparison between the chapter in Teens, "A Scrape", where Lennie is caught reading a novel, The Beautiful Wretch, and a similar incident in A World of Girls (1886), an English book by the most popular British girls' author of the 1880's and 1890's, L.T. Meade, illustrates the two authors' attitudes to discipline and authority in regard to girls.

Certain similarities between Teens and A World of Girls suggest that Mack may have read the British book, ...

...sounds of laughter and merriment filled the air; the garden was all alive with gay young figures running here and there. Girls stood in groups under the horse-chestnut tree - girls walked two and two up the shady walk at the end of the garden - little ones gambolled and rolled on the grass...(A World of Girls)²²

And in the playground, and on the verandah, and in the little lobby at the bottom of the staircase, and on the great wooden staircase itself, girls, and girls, and girls. There were girls in groups of threes and fours; girls in pairs; girls standing shyly alone...(Teens p10)

Whether or not Mack had read the British book, Teens nevertheless appears to represent as strong a defiance of early English models of girls' school stories as Turner declared for Seven Little Australians against British family stories. In A World of Girls at the girls' school Lavendar House, Miss Good, the English
teacher, finds a copy of Jane Eyre nearby a senior's desk:

...Miss Good, the English teacher, stepped to the head of the room, and, holding a neatly bound volume of Jane Eyre in her hand, begged to know to whom it belonged. There was a hush of astonishment when she held up the little book, for all the girls knew well that this special volume was not allowed for school literature. (A World of Girls, p69)

In Teens, the respected and well-loved Miss Greyson ("every girl in the class adored Miss Greyson") is the discoverer of the dreadful deed.

This was a most daring piece of wickedness. There was hardly anything worse that a girl could do, than read a story-book in school. Mabel was shocked and a little frightened. She glanced over Lennie's arm for a minute, and took in two lines of the page nearest her. Then she read two more...All of a sudden, Miss Greyson looked straight up at Lennie. She knew at once what was going on...

"Will you please pass me what you have there?"...When it reached the front desk, she stepped forward, and took possession of it. She lifted it up, and looked at the name on the first page:
The Beautiful Wretch
Oh, the thrill that went through the class as those dreadful words fell from her lips:
The Beautiful Wretch
Another thrill, for she had said it aloud again. This time her voice was shocked. The first time it had only been angry. The shock must have been quite a startling one, for she had turned pale. (pp124-7)

In A World of Girls the possible threat to the girls' moral outlook is treated very seriously by girls and teachers alike. Mrs Willis the headmistress, known as the girls' 'mother-friend', is distressed and disappointed and the senior girl, Dora Russell, is punished. (That Jane Eyre is the 'special volume' considered unsuitable reading for the girls at Lavendar
House says a good deal about what was regarded as acceptable behaviour in girls in late nineteenth century England.) Similarly, a small crisis develops at Lennie's school - Miss Hammerton is called in and a note sent to Lennie's father. Meanwhile the girls enjoy immensely the drama of the event.

All the practice sums were stopped now. The class craned round to look at Lennie's face, and a hush of excitement fell over the girls. There was going to be a scene! They were almost grateful to Lennie for having done something she ought not to have done, it was so nice to have arithmetic broken up by a scene. (p125)

Lennie is "a little frightened, and a little defiant, and altogether uncomfortable" while Miss Greyson is "shocked" and nervous. The tension is broken, and both teachers made to look foolish when Dr Leighton reveals that, apart from the sensational title, The Beautiful Wretch is a harmless book.

This incident in Teens pictures adults as victims of moral traps of their own making, and the outcome suggests that Lennie and the other girls have a better chance of growing up morally responsible without the over-refined sensibilities of adults. Of course, the message in A World of Girls is quite the opposite; girls must be hedged about with restrictions on their conduct, social niceties and good examples of adult conduct in order that they are not lost forever to the respectable world. Mack seems to support Turner's contention in respect to Judy, that girls, particularly
spirited or talented girls, need only a guiding hand in their growth to maturity to help them over rough patches. Differences between **Teens** and **A World of Girls** also have implications for the later development of girls' stories in England and Australia. Girls' schools were a fairly new innovation in Britain when **A World of Girls** was published in 1886. Nevertheless, the picture of school as a self-contained world wherein even mothers were replaced by a 'mother-friend' are the precursors of twentieth century British girls' school stories where school rules, elaborate rituals and codes of behaviour govern a world which appears quite separate from home-life. That type of school story did not transfer well to an Australian setting where boarding school was not an essential or inevitable component of middle-class life. **Teens**, where school and home life intermingle, is a lonely pioneer of the Australian school story which was swamped in the twentieth century by the 'grey mass' of English school stories and by home-bred imitations of the imported product. Schoolgirl behaviour in **Teens** is not governed by any rationale involving the honour of the school and as a result focuses more on independent action and on individual girls in contrast to the group dynamics of English school stories.

**Teens** seems to be unique amongst girls' literature in that no insults are directed towards girls and women
because of their sex. None of the girl characters wish to be boys, and neither are any of them referred to as boyish, although there is however one "lady-like boy".34 Nobody agonises over their future and Mack refers only once to the changes girls may have to make in their lives.

There is no time brighter and merrier than the breaking-up at school. But it has its sadness. Some of the girls have left their school-days behind them for ever that night, and are turning from the lovely land of girlhood to face the strange and unknown country of womanhood. (p211)

Another unusual feature of Teens is the relationships between sisters and brothers, girls and boys, where, although often rivals, they enjoy and admire each others' talents and company. The girls however tend always to do things a little better than the boys.

Lennie's elder brother, Bert, cleverly tricks Mabel James into leaving a tea-party at the Leighton's house one hour earlier than she need by turning forward all the clocks in the house. Bert revels in this trick but the girls get their revenge when Bert entertains his friends (known jointly as the "Junior Whites") by devising a trick that surpasses Bert's in cunning and effectiveness.

When the Junior Whites realised the trick these girls had played them, they were stunned. It was not anger, and not disappointed greed, though every single oyster had disappeared; it was pure unaffected admiration. (p88)

Brothers in girls' books are usually shown as unsympathetic and often openly hostile to their sisters
as well as being useful objects of sisterly devotion and self-sacrifice before a husband comes along. The advice of many girls' books to "first devote yourself to your family" is a catch-cry noticeably lacking in Teens. Mabel, even although her mother is dead and she is the only girl in a family of six, is not expected at fifteen to play the part of the dead mother - nor does she seem tempted to do so. None of her brothers go astray and need a helping hand and Mabel's apparent lack of interest in the home is not held against her. What girls are valued for in Teens is obvious from the description of Mabel at school prize night.

It was easy to see that Mabel was a favourite. The girls made their hands smart with clapping her as she went forward to the table, her tall figure stooping slightly, but her brown, curly head held well back. They knew that she was true and plucky, and full of fun; warm-hearted, a good friend, and a good fighter; bright and clever with it all; a girl to be depended on by girls - a born leader. (p210)

Generally speaking, however, Mack refrains from praising her characters and in Teens girls are forthright, greedy, dirty, lazy and funny more often than they are dainty, bitchy and clean, and these characteristics lead to several very amusing incidents. Many early girls' books are only unintentionally humourous; Teens however is genuinely funny. The two most humourous scenes in Teens both involve food and
once again, the 'taking-down' of school mistresses.

Nell Neilly, "the life of the class", tempted by "the bowl of soup, the hot roast beef and baked potatoes, and the plate of dainty fairy-pudding" meant for the headmistress' dinner, takes the tray of food into an empty class-room and eats "every morsel of poor Miss Hammerton's dinner". Miss Hammerton, left to starve during the afternoon classes, is in a high temper when she confronts Nell,

'Have you no explanation to give, Elinor?' 'Hungry,' Nell murmured low...
'You are a most audacious child! A most impertinent little girl!' she cried angrily. Then she looked down at the pale face before her, and was struck with its thinness and its pallor. Up into her warm woman's heart pity came leaping, and her eyes softened suddenly. The child might have been hungry often, for she had olive circles under her big black eyes, and her hands and wrists were as thin as a bird's.
'What did you have for breakfast?' she asked hurriedly.
Nell thought a minute. 'Porridge,' she answered, looking up quickly, and then down again. 'Anything else?' Nell thought again. 'Bacon and eggs.' 'Anything else?' The pity that had softened Miss Hammerton's voice began to melt out of it. 'Toast and honey.' 'Anything else?' 'And marmalade.' 'Anything else?' 'Cocoa.' 'Anything else.' 'A banana.' 'And was that all?' 'And another banana.' 'And you were hungry!' Nell thought the pause that followed was very trying. (pp100-101)
The next most favourite girl in the school to Mabel James is Ella Hodson whose father owns a 'lolly' shop. One Friday she brings a whole basket of chocolate ice, "black-and-white", to school and all the girls have a feast. At the Friday afternoon sewing lesson the girls take up their already grubby pieces of calico and attempt to sew with sticky fingers and needles. Miss Crispy, the sewing teacher, is dismayed and puzzled by the breaking cotton and the squeaky and sticky needles.

As she took hold of the needle of one girl, and another, to show her some new stitch, she found that her own fingers had an unpleasant feeling, and that the needle went through only with a very hard push. (p153)

Nellie, of course, is the first girl to be caught by Miss Crispy who is amazed to find all the girls' mouths filled with sweets.

'I wish every girl in this room to turn the contents of her pocket on to her lap.'...
Pocket after pocket was turned out, and, among all the queer collections, including such items as a doll's bonnet in pink wool, a pencil-sharpener, a white soap baby, a nail-brush, a little empty glass bottle, balls of crochet wool, innumerable beads and shells, there invariably fell into the lap, from the upturned pockets, a lump of chocolate ice, wrapped, or partially wrapped, in sticky paper, through which the black of the chocolate had worked its greasy way. (p156)

Mack very effectively pictures the supposed sweetness of girls as every bit unpleasant as the "frogs and snails and puppydogs' tails" that are popularly supposed to represent little boys.
III

Nell's big scene is supposedly based on the real life incident of Louise Mack eating the headmistress' dinner. It is a crime that would not suit the much milder Lennie. Lennie is not 'Louise'. Rather, many incidents from Mack's life are attributed to other characters, or somewhat diluted.

In the book the girls, staying at Blackheath, in the Blue Mountains, set out with their mother's permission at 5 a.m. to watch the sun rise over Govett's Leap. In reality they crept out at two o'clock with out Jemima's [Louise's mother] knowledge.

Perhaps Mack felt that she, as a girl, was too disobedient and reckless a character for the heroine of a girls' book. The alterations she makes are small, but they nevertheless point to a reluctance to be entirely truthful about girlhood even in such a seemingly casual and amusing novel as Teens. In the sequels to Teens, the disparity between Mack's experience and that of Lennie's and Mabel's, widens to be replaced by much used literary patterns.

A persistent theme in girls' books is girls' attraction to romantic fiction:

Kathleen Carewe, Mabel's story, promised well, the girls thought. Kathleen had shining golden hair, and eyes like stars, and was the daughter of a duke, and was indeed, Lady Kathleen Carewe. The little girls loved this story. (Teens, p193)
Writers for girls often acknowledge this tendency (or myth) of what girls are supposed to like in their own books which show girls as neither romantic nor sentimental - usually best sellers at that! Mack's principal achievement in Teens is that she does not confuse her character's attraction to romance with her depiction of their everyday lives. Mack appears to be content to set down what girls (in her experience at least) do rather than what they are supposed to be. This is not the case with the two sequels to Teens, Girls Together (1898) and Teens Triumphant (1933), where Lennie and Mabel, no longer schoolgirls, have to face the restrictions and expectations of being young women.

'You are getting older now Lennie,' he [Dr Leighton] had said.
'Sixteen is nearly a woman. Do you know, little woman, the meaning of dignity?'
'I thought only old women had it,' said Lennie.

In Girls Together Mabel returns from two years in Paris having studied art and sets up a studio in Sydney, eventually becoming well-known for her portraits. She has changed her attitude to domestic tasks considerably.

She smoothed a crease out of the cloth - a fresh and spotless one, unlike the crumpled, dirty tablecloth Jane had laid over the table on the occasion of Lennie's first visit to the house - and deftly arranged a length of daffadil silk, as a table centre. Slender bronze vases...Then she straightened the knives and forks, and glanced into the tumblers. (Girls Together, p32)
Lennie has to change too. She fails her University entrance examination and has to take charge of the Leighton household when her mother is invalided. Both Mabel, and to a greater extent, Lennie, have some difficulty in adapting to change and to redefining their ambitions, outlook, and expectations in order to fit comfortably into society. By way of contrast Bert, Lennie's brother, has his future neatly parcelled-up and determined:

Bert was a great, broad-shouldered fellow of twenty-one now, and the University had had him for two years. He was to be a metallurgist some day, but just at this time of his life he was tasting the first sweets of dances, and "at homes", and afternoon tea parties, at all of which he was in great request. (Girls Together, p57)

After a talk with Mabel's painting master, Peter Way, Lennie is convinced that, "It is better to be a good woman than a great one" and resolves to,

...help everyone...brother and sisters, friends, strangers—all who came near her. She would be patient, and pitiful, and generous; never cross, never tired, never self-absorbed. She darted on rapidly. She would learn dressmaking, and...(Girls Together, p194)

Going on the results of Lennie's resolutions in Teens and Girls Together, this may well be tongue-in-cheek, but we do not find out the success or otherwise of the resolution prior to the conclusion of the book and nevertheless, Mack does seem to regard Lennie's new
role seriously, regardless of how well she performs her duties,

'There will be plenty to do now, dear,' the Mother whispered pitifully to Lennie. 'You must take my place in the household. It is better after all that the University was denied you. There is always a reason for these things.' (Girls Together, p158)

Mack's major theme in this sequel to Teens is to explore the possibilities of girlhood ambitions when pursued into adulthood. In Girls Together Mabel achieves her ambition to be a famous painter but also marries Bert, Lennie's brother - a course of action that, it is suggested, will hinder any future success in her career.

'Do you know what Monsieur Jean Clarey said to me one day? "When you go back to Australia, Mees, you must take care you do not marry, for eef you marry you will never paint better than you do now".' 'Oh, Mabel, how absurd! Imagine you getting married.' (Girls Together, p76)

Lennie's decline follows a very well-trodden literary path. She fails in her ambition, is restless and unhappy when circumstances tie her to home, and finally is convinced (by a man) that what she is doing is worthwhile and the correct course for a woman to take. In Teens, one of Lennie's stories written for the school magazine is, unknown to her, a plagiarism.

Under the fig-trees the story was read aloud next day. It was called A Swiss Legend...Lennie did not tell them [her friends], for she did not know it herself, that it was a story she had read years before in her childhood. (Teens, p183)
Similarly, Mack is influenced by her girlhood reading in determining the outcome of Lennie's and Mabel's ambitions. *Girls Together* is bedevilled by the literary patterns of past domestic fiction, the pervasiveness of which Mack acknowledges several times.

"Something was going to happen. She [Brenda] knew that positively, and she felt sure that the 'something' was that Bert was going to ask, or had asked, Mabel to become his wife. This expression had come to her from reading that was over-old for her...Only that morning Mother had scolded her a little severely..."It is because you are only a little girl yet, Brenda, and I don't think it is good for little girls to fill their minds with the doings of older people.' Mother meant with love stories, but she did not put it in that way. A little girl of eleven should know nothing about such things. But, alas! Brenda had read 'Little Women', and how Meg married John, and Amy married Laurie; and she had longed just as earnestly as every other girl has longed for Laurie to marry Jo, and for the old Professor to go away and die, or marry some kind fat lady in Germany. (*Girls Together*, pp184-85)

In *Girls Together*, Lennie scorns the idea of falling in love, but Mabel points out that although she can't imagine doing so herself, other girls must because there is so much about the subject in books.

'Yes, books! But books are different; they're not life.' 'I don't know. Sometimes they are.' (*Girls Together*, p77)

Mack accepts and repeats a literary version of girlhood life that her earlier book had transcended.

Lennie gets her chance at last in *Teens Triumphant*, published thirty-four years after *Girls Together*, when she goes to London and achieves fame as
a writer. It is never easy to say whether a book is, or is not, a children's book, and that definition includes adolescent novels, but *Teens Triumphant* does read like an adult book and is essentially no different to the types of adult books Mack wrote as an expatriate writer. It does suggest however, that Mack identified closely with Lennie, and as in *Teens*, includes a good deal of her own experience, in this case as a writer and a young woman in London. Lennie is also more articulate about, and preoccupied with, her role as a woman.

She was nursing a vision. She suddenly encountered a great world picture. She saw the billions of women doing all the hard things; the hard, ugly, sweating, unpalatable things of this world, and, suffering greatly, ever hopeful that their sufferings and their efforts would be appreciated and applauded by the Man, gradually learning, poor souls, that Man could never applaud, could never appreciate, because Man could never notice! And then in that vision Lennie saw why Man could never see the Woman's hard work...Because he never looked that way, Man. He never looked into the backyard where the work was done. He fixed his eyes always on the shop windows where chiffon presentations of the female form divine mocked at the hard things, the tough things, the brave things, that the poor foolish mistaken woman would keep on doing, and who wanted her to, who cared? (*Teens Triumphant*, pp259-60)

Lennie achieves fame in London writing a romantic serial which becomes extraordinarily popular. Her friend Dennis is disappointed that she should sink so low in order to make money. (He is independently wealthy; Lennie has no money at all when she arrives in London.) This major theme about the relative worth of
certain types of writing in *Teens Triumphant*, can be compared to the same minor theme of Ethel Turner's *Jennifer J*. However, unlike Turner's character, Charlotte Munro - who although denigrating her work, nevertheless keeps writing popular novels to provide luxuries for her family - Lennie decides that Dennis is right and it is indeed better to starve than to 'pot-boil', and she forgives his attitude to her work, "One doesn't apologise for saying one can't abide Ethel Dell". Lennie does not starve - she marries Dennis - but it is apparent in *Teens Triumphant* that Mack's experience as a young woman writer in Sydney had left their scars.

Concluding remarks comparing the novels of Ethel Turner, Louise Mack and Lilian Turner, are made at the end of Chapter five. It needs to be pointed out here, however, that although Mack made a major contribution to Australian girls' fiction, her popularity has never come close to matching Ethel Turner's. This is in part due to the small number of children's books written by her, and also to the lack of numerous (or recent) reprints of her novels. It is unfortunate that *Teens* is not more widely known. Although the sequels, *Girls Together* and *Teens Triumphant* follow well-established literary patterns of girls' fiction, *Teens* is a very unusual girls' novel. In *Teens* Louise Mack has created a girlhood utopia. She convincingly portrays creative
and outgoing girls without resort to the fictional convention of making such characters misfits, rebels or outsiders. The praise Mabel receives on Speech Night from the other girls - that they admire her qualities of leadership, truthfulness and courage - points to Mack promoting a set of values for girls, values whilst invariably present in other girls' fiction, are usually submerged or disguised. In doing this, Mack does not avoid the issue of change - of growing from girl to woman. What she does do is suggest that Lennie, and Mabel in particular, will cope successfully with whatever the future may bring. In Teens there is a positive note that is not always heard in other fiction for girls.
CHAPTER 5  "You're only a girl" - 
Lilian Turner's novels

So [Betty] made her list...At the top of it she wrote -

'MY DAY'S WORK'
and then came underneath it lines and crosslines, making pigeonholes for the hours.


7.30 to 8a.m. .. Feed Baby. Cook Breakfast and over-look table. Pack Cyril's lunch.

8 to 9.30a.m. .. Make beds. Bath baby. Garden.

9.30 to 11a.m. .. Cook. Settle children to play. Feed Baby.

11a.m. to 1p.m. .. Bolt and bar my door, and write.

1p.m. to 2p.m. .. Dinner.

2p.m. to 3p.m. .. Write.

3p.m. to 4p.m. .. Sew.

4p.m. to 5p.m. .. Children's hour.

5p.m. to 6p.m. .. Cook dinner, etc.

6p.m. to 9p.m. .. Dinner. Father. Children to bed. Cyril. Sewing.

9p.m. to 11p.m. .. Silence and writing.

(Betty the Scribe, 1906)
Lilian Turner (1870-1956) and her younger sister Ethel began their writing careers together, editing in partnership a school magazine and then the Parthenon. However, Ethel's first dazzling success eclipsed Lilian's less spectacular start, and the elder sister never came close to the fame and standing enjoyed by the younger.

Poor old Lil is very depressed, it all seems waiting for her and it is very galling for me to keep succeeding and her, the elder sister, be behind. I wrote to Steele and begged him to hurry up and read her manuscript.1

A Bulletin review of Lilian's first book, The Lights of Sydney(1896) judged it to be, like its illustrations, "'pretty' and 'artistic', and three-quarters of it absolutely untrue"- but likely to be popular, "And it is popularity that pays."2 The Bulletin's emphasis on the romantic aspects of the book, "the girlish imagination", was a contrast with the reaction to Seven Little Australians, which was praised for its realism. The title of the review, "A Book of Girlish Imagination", echoed the Bulletin comments regarding Ethel's The Family At Misrule in which it was noted one could divide girlish imagination from observation, and therefore by inference associated it with Ethel's novels for children. The term "girlish imagination" became for the Red Page a charge to be levelled at any book written by a woman who strayed from the brand of realism they endorsed.
The review of *The Lights of Sydney* predicted fairly accurately the future direction of Lilian's career. *The Lights of Sydney* was not written for children - it begins with a woman and her baby running away from her husband - but the review notes the one successful character is Barbara, a teenage girl, "almost the one character in the book who is more than a clothes-horse for incidents and sentiments."3 All of Lilian's subsequent novels were written for and about girls. Her next book, *Young Love*, not published until 1902, was brought out by Ward, Lock and Lilian redirected her career in the trail of her sister. It is difficult to trace the progression of Lilian's writing during the 'dry' years 1896 to 1902 as, unlike Ethel, Lilian was rarely the subject of journal articles and very few personal papers have survived. Ethel's diaries and correspondence with Ward, Lock is the most valuable source of information about Lilian, and although at a remove, this perspective on Lilian in a way reflects the few articles that always described her as "Ethel Turner's sister".

Ethel's diary records 'Lil's' triumphs and her set-backs.

Poor old Lil's 'By the Blue Mountains' has been sent back by Robertson's. But were glad, Ward, Lock are the better firm.4 It seems this 1893 manuscript was also rejected by Ward, Lock some time late in 1895, although it is not
clear whether or not it was a children's novel.5 Once Lilian was on Ward, Lock's list of children's writers, Ethel still appeared to mediate between Lilian and the publishers, passing on messages as to terms, manuscript alterations, acceptances, and even royalty cheques!6 It seems that Lilian, unlike Ethel, never established a close relationship with Mr Steele. In an 1909 interview, Ethel gave advice to aspiring authors: "Have something to say; say it in your own way, without following the tracks of anybody else; then find a publisher."7 It is unfortunate for Lilian that she followed close enough on the heels of her sister to be almost totally overshadowed. Lilian's twenty-two children's books however were somewhat different to Ethel's and it would be quite misleading to regard her writing as simply derivative. She pursued the theme of the difficulties faced by girls in carrying their youthful vitality and ambition into adulthood much more vigorously than Ethel, and consistently sought the one audience - the older adolescent girl. Two early novels, An Australian Lassie (1903), and more particularly its sequel, Betty the Scribe (1906)8, established a pattern in her books from which she did not often diverge. Unlike independent, heroic Judy Woolcot, Lilian Turner's heroine, "madcap" Betty Bruce survives childhood in An Australian Lassie, to appear as a sixteen-year-old in the sequel Betty the Scribe.
The Bruce household is large, genteel, poor and somewhat chaotic. Betty's elder sister, Dorothea, is a golden girl, showered with privileges by her adoring parents who make sacrifices to ensure she is 'finished' properly. Betty also has a twin, Cyril, a lazy, selfish, complaining coward of a boy. Below the twins comes a flock of children which in Betty the Scribe consists of Baby(six months old), Pepper(two), Dick(three), Joan(five) and, Nancy(eleven). In An Australian Lassie Dick has yet to be born and Cyril is the only boy.

He [Cyril] was the only one who received payment for his work, and no one demurred, for was he not the only boy of the family and in the eyes of them all a sort of king! (An Australian Lassie, p33)

As with the Woolcot parents in Seven Little Australians, Mr and Mrs Bruce are quite ineffectual. Mr Bruce is a kindly, forgetful, rather useless man, who works firstly as a struggling author and later (in Betty the Scribe) as an equally struggling magazine editor. Mrs Bruce, apart from producing all these children, mostly drifts around the garden equipped with a basket and a hat.

Her [Betty's] mother could never capably wield a broom, or scrub, or dust, or cook-she had done all four, but the results were pathetic. (An Australian Lassie, p30)

Mrs Bruce has been cast-off by her wealthy father for marrying below her and by the opening of Betty the Scribe she has succumbed to the strain of child-bearing
and is dead, leaving a new baby in Betty's care.

A major theme in both these books is the incompatability of "romance" and "reality". Betty is constantly contrasted with Dorothea and Cyril; with Dorothea because she is an "elder sister", beautiful, refined and lady-like, and with Cyril because he is a boy and subsequently expected to be brave and resourceful. Lilian is at pains to point out the difference between the real-life attributes of the "elder sister" and the "brother and only boy" and the way in which they are presented in popular fiction and expected to behave by society. Dorothea hates coming home from her exclusive boarding school in Macquarie Street to the dirty, chaotic "little bush home" in North Sydney. She wants to live the life of her wealthy schoolmates who are blissfully free of unkempt, noisy younger brothers and sisters. Dorothea is made to feel guilty about this by one of her many adoring schoolmates who regards being an 'elder sister' in an almost holy light.

Dot opened her eyes very wide.
'Why did you want to be an elder sister?' she asked.
Mona still looked red and ashamed.
'You should read The Flower of the Family,' she said, 'and The Eldest of Seven, Holding in Trust. You'd know then.'
Dorothea had read the last, and she began to see and understand.
'You've got your mother and sisters,' said Mona shyly.
And then for the first time it occurred to Dorothea that she herself was an elder sister,
that she was the eldest of five, and that infinite possibilities lay before her. 'There's only my father and my aunt and brother when I go home,' said Mona. (An Australian Lassie, p110)

Dorothea resolves to live-up to these fictional martyrs who promise to care for the little ones on their mother's death-bed and refuse all offers of marriage and all pleasure to bring-up the family. However, this noble aim is put off indefinitely when school is finished and instead she accepts the many invitations from her wealthy school friends to join them on various holidays around Australia. Even the death of her mother doesn't bring her home. Mrs Bruce dies between books and Betty is running the household at the opening of Betty the Scribe while Dorothea is living a life of luxury as companion to Mona Parbury, a wealthy squatter's daughter.

Similarly, Cyril does not fulfil either the requirements of the honourable and brave boy as represented in fiction, nor live up to social expectations as a protective and considerate brother. As with Dorothea, Cyril is highly regarded by his parents, chiefly because he is the only boy until the birth of Dick. Cyril is referred to as "that small hope of the Bruce's", and the irony of that description is brought home when Cyril shows his cowardice in the face of a challenge from John Brown, the boy adopted by the Bruce's estranged grandfather to take their place
as heirs to his property. In contrast Betty has
kicked, pinched and insulted "big" John Brown and
dresses as a boy in order to protect the honour of the
Bruces, and fight Brown when Cyril refuses to fight
him. Neither Cyril or Dorothea live up to the
fictional paradigms of the elder sister or only
brother, yet Betty admires both the ideals. She
constantly makes excuses for Cyril's cowardice and
unreliability, and admires the type of girl Dorothea
represents. Two little girls who live close to the
Bruce's are particular targets of her admiration.

'Geraldine and Fay!' she exclaimed.
...Their dresses were white and spotless, and
reached almost to their knees; their hats were
flat shady things trimmed with muslin and lace.
Their hair was beautifully dressed and curled,
their boots shining - and buttoned, and their
faces smiling and happy-looking. They were
Betty's ideals! (An Australian Lassie, p76)

The reality of Betty's situation is that it is
she, not Cyril, who is brave, resourceful, reliable and
caring, intent on preserving the honour of the family
name. Also, with Dorothea away - promising herself
that one day she will return and bring order and
serenity to the house - it is Betty who actually has to
bear the burden of unpleasant chores and, in Betty the
Scribe, has the entire responsibility of caring for
four babies, Nancy, Cyril and her father, at the tender
age of seventeen! However, Betty is not immune to the
ideals of fiction. Inspired by the dreams of John
Brown who rejects his inheritance and wants to be a "self-made man" like the heroes of his book, ("Here's the book I got myself from") Betty decides to be a "self-made woman" and models herself on a singer Madame S---whose story she finds in an illustrated magazine. Betty, caught reading in her grandfather's library, explains she, "...only wanted to see what sort of woman to be". (An Australian Lassie, p146) This section of the book is particularly interesting in regard to Lilian Turner's attitudes towards the place of women in society. Whilst Betty and John Brown are described as "foolish barefooted waifs" when they run away to Sydney to make their fortune, Turner does seem to regard Betty's anguish at the lack of "self-made women" seriously.

'Oh, I wish I was a boy,' she said. 'What's the good of a girl? What can a girl do? Don't you know anything about self-made women?' John knew very little. In fact he too very much doubted the 'good of a girl'. He told her so quite bluntly, but added that she'd better make the best of it. 'There must be some self-made women,' insisted Betty. 'I'll ask father tonight.'... John thought again, but could only shake his head. 'All women can do,' he said, 'is wash up, and cook dinners and mend clothes!'... But now John had slid back a door and let her peep into all the glories of a new world, and she had seen there wealth and fame to be had for the earning - by men and boys! 'Try and find out about self-made women,' she said, when he left her at the turn through the bush. 'See if there were any women artists, or women inventors, or women pirates, or anything. Goodbye.' (An Australian Lassie, pp131-133)
After Betty and John have run away to the city and Betty is more successful than John in making a start on her 'fortune', John has some answers regarding "self-made women",

'Oh, I'd be sixpence, [on the tram] you see, because I'm thirteen and a half,' said John. 'I can't afford to pay sixpence. It's always harder for a fellow to get on than a girl. That's why you hear more about self-made men than self-made women - they're thought more of.' (An Australian Lassie, p216)

The tone of the book becomes quite bitter when Betty considers her relationship to her grandfather.

She and Cyril and all the rest of them were merely the children of his [John Brown's] grandfather's daughter. And as he impressed upon Betty, women didn't count for much in the world's eyes. (An Australian Lassie, p135)

Betty is constantly insulted because of the fact she is a girl. This is particularly ironic when smears against girls are made by those least able to support them;

'You can't fight,' said Cyril disgustedly. 'You're only a girl.' (An Australian Lassie, p94)

This is Cyril's comment to Betty when she appears dressed as a boy, setting out to fight John Brown whilst Cyril cowers in bed too frightened to take up John Brown's challenge. John Brown also uses Betty's sex as a pretext for insults.

'Girl!' whispered John in scorn. The trouble at Betty's heart stirred and hurt her. Was it not enough to be a girl, without being called one - and in such a whisper. (An Australian Lassie, p171)
Nearly all the male characters in *An Australian Lassie* and *Betty the Scribe* are portrayed as lacking in integrity: Cyril is a whining coward; Mr Bruce is an ineffectual, neglectful father; John Brown's father is incapable of looking after, or even providing care for, his own child when his wife dies; and Captain Carew, the grandfather, is ridiculously proud and pig-headed. Considering Mrs Bruce's general carelessness, and the portraits of other parents in the books, Betty stands out as particularly capable. She is however entirely unappreciated by her family.

When Mr Bruce was busy over a story, or an article, or a book, everyone in the house knew. Then the study door would be closed and the window only opened at the top...When Dot wrote a story, as she very frequently did now-a-days, portions of it would be carried into the study for her father to see, and her mother would proudly read page after page of the neat round hand...But when Betty wrote her stories, no one in the house - excepting Cyril, of course - knew anything about it! No one kept the house quiet for Betty, and no one wondered wherever she got her ideas from. And yet she had quite a collection of fairy stories and poems of her own composition. (*An Australian Lassie*, pp86-87)

Without a doubt it is Turner's intention that the reader admire Betty and assess the insults directed towards her, and women in general, in light of Betty's superiority and achievements. Betty is often very forward in stating 'hometruths' that reveal the
inconsistencies of other characters.

'Dear little Betty,' she [Dorothea] said, 'promise me, you poor little thing, to be good all the time I am away.'

But Betty, unused to caresses, slipped away.

'You always are away,' she said. 'I'll be as good as I want to. I wonder how good you'd be if suddenly you had to stay at home and wash up and dust.' (An Australian Lassie, p249)

However, Lilian Turner, whilst obviously supportive of her heroine, nevertheless makes Betty's path to her ambition as thorny as possible. Betty would be poor material for a novel if her progress was easy; however in these books, as in most girls' books, girlish aspirations cannot even be dearly bought - they are, for most heroines, simply unobtainable. In Betty the Scribe, when Betty is seventeen and caring for the whole family, the theme resolves itself into the popular one in girls' literature of a creative and ambitious girl who is held back by the demands placed on her by her family, and by social expectations of her place as a woman in a man's world. The high incidence of heroines who tend to show talent as writers, is an indication that authors were reflecting some of their own experiences as creative and ambitious women. However the difficulties faced by seventeen-years-old Betty are far greater than those Lilian had to deal with at the same age in her own life. At seventeen Lilian was working hard at being a writer, and she most probably did have some minor setbacks, but apart from the upsets caused by her stepfather, her family was supportive and
loving, not a burden holding her back from her ambitions. The portrait of Betty may well be coloured by the disappointing outcome of Lilian's aspirations. In addition, a combination of literary pressures and personal inclination appears to have influenced Turner to compromise her heroine's achievements resulting in a very ambivalent message in regard to the worth of Betty's struggles.

Lilian Turner represents in the character of Betty Bruce the extraordinary difficulties of being different. Dorothea and Cyril, although in many ways lacking integrity, have a pleasant life because they at least outwardly conform to socially acceptable stereotypes. Society in fact, especially as represented by their families, seems almost anxious to apply particular labels to them, and to interpret all their actions as signs of their conformity to these paradigms. So, even if their actions do not support their images, they are propped-up by social acceptance. Betty herself is particularly anxious that Cyril and Dorothea conform to type. In turn, Betty's family regard her as a bit of a nuisance and try to categorise her as being "at an awkward age":

Mrs Bruce sighed and smiled. As no immediate danger seemed to threaten Betty, there appeared no reason for instant action. They could still take life leisurely, as they had done all their married days. It was only madcap Betty with her ways and plans and pranks. (An Australian Lassie, pp194-195)
Betty however so insistently defies stereotyping that
she becomes an unplaced person. Her outstanding
qualities are ignored because to accept or acknowledge
them would mean an acceptance of Betty as that
frightening and unheard of creature - the "self-made
woman", an image ignored in fiction, and by society, as
Betty most surely finds out. Ironically, in turn,
Betty's unique character causes difficulties for Turner
which lead her to compromise Betty's individuality.

Turner quite deliberately pursues the theme of the
influence of fiction in determining a person's actions,
and she is obviously very aware of the effect her
portrait of Betty may have on girl readers. However,
the types of characters Turner creates are also
influenced by standardised literary concepts. One
reason for Betty's hardships is suggested in the
earlier analysis of Betty's character as caught
between the ideal of Dorothea, the elder sister, on
the one hand and Cyril, the only boy, on the other.
Betty's path to fame and autonomy as an author cannot
be reasonably smooth or trouble-free because there are
no fictional paradigms to use as a reference point.
All the fictional "self-made women" who have gone
before (and there are painfully few) such as Jane Eyre
and Jo March, stop short of their ambition (Jo March)
or are not hampered by family responsibilities (Jane
Eyre). As is clear from L.T. Meade's A World of Girls,
Jane Eyre, the first, and perhaps the clearest, representation of an independent and ambitious woman, presented an image that was considered both dangerous and disturbing. However, the Betty books did not seem particularly threatening to anyone at the time of their publication. In a review of Betty the Scribe quoted on the inside cover of another of Lilian Turner's books, Paradise and the Perrys, "The Christian World says",

A very fresh and fascinating story is 'Betty the Scribe' by Lilian Turner. It is sure to set the girls who read her story longing for a career of their own, but that will not matter if they learn all they ought to learn from Betty who is almost as desirable a friend as Jo in 'Little Women'.

One could be generous and presume The Christian World intended this comment to mean that Betty is a desirable friend because she is honest, hard-working and ambitious, and carries these virtues into her pursuit of a career. However the intention of this rather loaded statement could be viewed in the light of another Australian book about an ambitious and restless girl, My Brilliant Career (1901), which although written with an adult readership in mind, has an almost identical theme to Lilian Turner's two 'Betty' books.

The books have so much in common that it is tempting to speculate whether Lilian Turner actually read My Brilliant Career before writing An Australian Lassie, or perhaps more significantly, Betty the Scribe. Sybylla Melvyn, like Betty Bruce, is
considered difficult by her family and unfavourably compared to her conventional, pretty sister Gertie and to her unreliable brother Horace. Sybylla's ambition is not as clear-cut as Betty's yet like Betty she is thwarted in her attempts at success by family pressures. Also like Betty, Sybylla is always chosen for the unpleasant work of the family:

For the present, of my family I am the most suited to wait about common public-houses to look after my father when he is inebriated. It breaks my mother's heart to do it; it is dangerous for my brothers; imagine Gertie in such a position! But me it does not injure, I have the faculty for doing that sort of thing without coming to harm, and if it makes me more bitter and godless, well, what matter?10

Both girls feel their ambition to be a torture at times, a handicap that keeps them from happiness.

Life to Betty was a very troublesome disorderly affair - a perpetual striving to make the path of beauty and the path of duty identical. (Betty the Scribe, p14)

Will it always be this ghastly aloneness? Why am I not good and pretty and simple like other girls? (My Brilliant Career, p225)

Both also see housework as an endless drudgery:

Today's sufferings had outlined the future as well as illuminated the past. The beautiful life of romance, the bliss of creating heroes and heroines, of living the only life worth the taking up, was to be hers no longer. A life of cooking, of mending and making, of dusting and children-minding stretched before her. (Betty the Scribe, p107)

I could see my life, stretching out ahead of me, barren and monotonous...Today it was washing, ironing tomorrow, next day baking, after that scrubbing—thus on and on. (My Brilliant Career, p226)
Sybylla is relentless in her criticisms of the whole fabric of Australian country life, which is shown as having nothing to offer her other than a sort of lifelong imprisonment. It is likely that *The Christian World* would not have regarded Sybylla a "desirable friend" as her principal message appears to be that home life is crippling and unrewarding. Lilian Turner, writing about suburban life however, shows women to be in control of their more-or-less comfortable and attractive homes which provide refuge and healing for those like Betty who suffer from the strains of the life of 'romance', that is, ambition. In spite of her apparent support for Betty's aspirations, Turner is very attracted to the ideal of women's traditional role, and has some difficulty in reconciling feminine achievement in areas outside the home with the obviously important role of women as mothers and homemakers.

As Betty wrote and ruled her list, her eyes went again and again to the three baby heads. All of them given into her keeping—her own. And in her heart, young as it was, blithe, dream-loving, there was yet the mysterious spirit of true womanhood. (Betty the Scribe, p18)

The term "true womanhood" echoes Turner's contention that domestic life was a woman's 'real' life, however she appears to confuse her pictures of domestic life with the "Ideal Woman" (her capitals) that Dorothea reads about in books. Although the books
read by Mona and Dorothea are obvious parodies of Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* and its imitators, and Turner mocks at the idea of the household angel, Dorothea *does* successfully become "Queen of the Kingdom of Home" and brings comfort and order to what had seemed a hellish home during Betty's 'reign'. Whilst Turner insists that Betty cannot have her "world of romance" and live in the 'real' world at the same time, she does in fact mix the two rather liberally. The comments of *The Christian World* recognise that Turner's overall attitude towards domestic life is not one of direct conflict. The mention of *Little Women* is well-founded: Betty, like Jo March, denies her sex as the only way she can see to overcome its restrictions. In achieving success, Turner suggests Betty relinquishes her claim to being a 'true' woman and remains perpetually a girl, a circumstance that is threatened by the hint, in the concluding pages of the book, that she and John Brown might one day fall in love;

> When she reached home she feverishly put on the shortest dress her wardrobe held and let her hair down her back, and tied it with a piece of pink ribbon. It was her way of indignantly insisting to Fate that she refused to be a Woman. (*Betty the Scribe*, p320)

This echoes Betty's assertion in *An Australian Lassie* when she declares, "I won't be a woman...I won't" in answer to John Brown's claim that "All women can do...is wash up, and cook dinners and mend clothes!".
John Brown comes to realise the falseness of his opinions,

He saw the thing quite clearly now, or thought he did. Betty was brave - she always had been. Cyril, her twin was a coward. Betty was the one to do; Cyril to blame whatever was done...And now, here she was again, ready to face the world for the others. Alone! A girl! (Betty the Scribe, p226)

However Lilian Turner does not present things at all "clearly" in her two Betty books.

In a later novel, Three New Chum Girls(1910), the same issues are examined in the form of a debate between two sisters. The elder, Peg, takes the role of the "Ideal Woman" and Honora that of the ambitious "New Woman".

'Peggy,' she said, 'do you know, because if you don't it's time you did, I'm a new woman, a modern woman? A Woman's Righter.'

'Oh,' said Peggy, in a very far-away tone, as one who had heard and would by and by understand - perhaps...

'Exactly how do you understand the Woman's Righter, Peggy?' she asked.

Peggy made a grimace.

'No hats off, no seats in a tram,' she murmured, and slipped a stack of saucers into their hot bath.

'Even so,' cried Honora with vigour.

'What then?'

'What then? Do you honestly think, Peggy, a plucky woman will desert her colours just because men refuse to be chivalrous to her?'

'Um,' said Peggy dubiously. 'Go on drying up, Honora.'

But Honora's ears were ears that heard not. 'A true Woman's Righter,' said she, flicking the back of a chair with her towel; 'isn't one who rushes to a platform and shrieks for freedom; who tears up and down streets in mobs and preaches politics while some man (in the background) keeps her in bread and butter and shoe leather.'
Peggy quietly stole the towel away and began rapidly drying china.
'The true Woman's Righter,' shouted Honora angrily, 'must be the absolutely independent woman. She's got to exist by her own efforts of brain or hand, before she can call out for her rights. Then-independent of man-she need not care if he fails her in chivalry. She need not care the snap of her little finger.'12

The girls, with their uncle and elder brother Tom, have come out from England and are setting up home on a small farm. Tom is bossy, vain and a snob. Peg waits on him hand and foot, but Honora refuses to accept what she regards as a false position as his dependent, and insists that her share of the land be given to her to farm: "There's one thing I'll never do, and that is depend on my men folk while I can depend on myself." She does however, without realising it, depend on Peg. Peg supports Honora by soothing Tom into releasing the land, by encouraging her efforts, and by making sure Honora eats well. Peg is shown to work almost as thanklessly for Honora as she does for Tom.

All three characters are caricatures, and one wonders as well whether readers would have enjoyed this sort of fictionalised debate. Certainly there is little satisfaction from seeing Tom get his just deserts; he marries a squatter's daughter and moves off to tyrannise another woman. However, although poor fiction, Three New Chum Girls clearly illustrates the
sort of issues Lilian was tackling.

'Peggy,' said Honora severely, 'do you know what you are?'
'A genius?' asked Peggy laughing.
Honora's eyes flashed.
'An unpaid drudge!' she cried. 'An unsalaried servant!' Colour flashed into Peggy's face, indignation into her eyes...
'Take a widower,' said Honora; 'take Mr. Scott, our nearest neighbour, for instance, and his five children. Say he engages a housekeeper to supervise, pays her so much wages, marks off so many holidays a month for her. If she has grievances she takes them to him, and he listens and tries to right them, if he values her...
'Presently,' continued Honora fiercely, 'presently he marries her.' She tossed out her arms dramatically. 'He at once stops her salary, and holidays are most unnecessary things for a wife. Has she grievances now? Let her bury them, hide them, anything, but on no account worry him with them.'
'Because she is now his partner,' said Peggy. 'She has climbed up to him in dignity. Troubles that the servant had no power to dismiss, the mistress may tackle. Her position is now to solve home worries—his world worries.'
'Pooh!', cried Honora...
'A housekeeper for the home. But, Nora, they want a heartkeeper too.' (Three New Chum Girls, pp 148-151)

Lilian gives more weight to Honora's radical outlook than Ethel ever gave to her female dissenters, while Peggy's unbelievable good nature and 'womanliness' is even shown to be excessive and, in a small way, harmful. But a debate between two extremes inevitably adopts a middle way. Peggy marries the man she had earlier refused because of family duties, and Honora marries the one person (apart from Peg) who had admired her independence and valued her for her courageous spirit—Mr Scott! It is the sort of moderate outcome that was suggested by John Brown's insight into Betty's
nature and their subsequent discovery of mutual (although denied) love. Lilian forsakes the ideal of female independence for the ideal of woman the homemaker. The sort of questions that are prompted by this latter ideal, "What would a home be like without a womanly woman?", influence the progress of her independent girls.

Louise Mack and Lilian Turner both appear to agree with Ethel Turner that the heroine's role in children's books can be redefined in light of Australian experience. While neither author makes the kind of explicit challenge to English literary models featured in the opening pages of Seven Little Australians, both authors use scenes and situations from well-known English and American books to point to differences in the Australian girl's way of life. Indeed, in two of her books, Lilian Turner deliberately sets out to re-create Australian versions of Little Women and What Katy Did. In Paradise and the Perrys (1908) four girls and their widowed mother leave their uncongenial city house to set-up their own business in the suburbs, a tea-house, which as it happens becomes a very successful venture. The connections with Little Women are unmistakable; all the girls are modelled closely on the March sisters, Addie, the eldest girl is a governess to a family called King, and several jokes
are made at the expense of the more sentimental scenes in *Little Women*.

'I always meant to be very good as soon as I was twenty-one,' said Addie dreamily. 'But it was my first season. I knew I was always looking out for a very poor family to help.'

'There was a poor family in the side street near our stables,' snapped Theo, who was feeling very put out.

'They were all boys,' said Addie; 'big, ugly boys! What I wanted was a very delicate mother with about five little girls and a new baby. I'd have made up my dresses for the little girls and have knitted sweet fleecy vests for the baby.'

The changes Lilian makes in translating *Little Women* to an Australian setting are significant as regards the new literary perception of girls established by Ethel Turner in *Seven Little Australians*. As individuals the girls are less finely drawn than the March sisters, and this is because Lilian is a somewhat careless writer, too given to intruding herself in her books by way of comments and observations, rather than allowing her characters to 'speak' for themselves. The 'Jo' character, Theo, suffers most in comparison to the original; she is forthright without being courageous, and impetuous without being funny. However, the eldest sister, Addie, is not as silly as Meg, and is not so attracted to 'frills'. Mavis is a much healthier Beth, addicted to housework but at the same time very energetic and lively. Mrs Perry is a far better developed character than Mrs March, and is not looked to as some sort of
sage, but rather is directed by Theo and Addie. However, the most significant alteration to the Little Women paradigm is that as a group, five women become successful and financially independent by their own endeavour. In spite of Theo's contention that what is needed is a man about the house ("a manly man takes a broad view of life") Addie and Theo make their plans to be financially independent and scorn male advice because they fear their uncles will be too conservative.

The outcome of Paradise and the Perry's illustrates Lilian's emphasis on the essential practicality of Australian girls, a national characteristic she holds out as an indication of future directions for girls and women. She emphasises this characteristic by insisting repeatedly in her books that her heroines are not the usual type of storybook characters, implying that they are more 'realistic'.

A scene in Peggy the Pilot, is modelled on the picnic in What Katy Did, where the children outline their ambitions. Peggy's ambitions are rather more practical than Katy's dreams of perfume-filled fountains and perennial leisure.

'I've thought everything out,' said Peggy slowly. 'I shall only grow some fruit or flower that is very, very dear to buy. And I shall grow countless acres of it. It will be more profitable even than gold-mining. When I've made heaps of money I'll engage other girls to come and live with me and help me to work. And we'll always
live in a tent—a large, cool marquee. 'I'll wear boy's clothing,' said Peggy promptly, 'and I'll have short hair. We won't have much cooking done, anyway—just dampers and cakes and things. And no potatoes.' Eleanor here sprang to her feet and, waving her notebook to command silence, cried: 'I beg to inform the honourable member that she has broken our first law. "No member," the law says, "may have any aspiration that is impractical and that cannot be practised at home straight away."' But Peggy laughed triumphantly. 'I'm starting—in a flower-pot,' she said. Admiration looked at her from every face...

Peggy's ambitions are a light-hearted picture of a girl's desire for a girl-centred society. Peggy envisages a society where she performs useful and congenial tasks, participates in commerce producing products that ensure her financial independence, dresses comfortably to suit herself and enjoys the company of her peers. Although presented as an Utopian vision, Peggy's society seems a rational estimation of what a girl's life could be like, if the apparent freedoms of Australian society were exploited.

Despite the humour of this scene, it does reflect serious concerns in Lilian's novels and in other family stories by her contemporaries, Ethel Turner and Louise Mack. All three authors write about girls like Peggy, who have ambitions and look to the future for happiness and success, within a context that assumes the truth of a free and equitable Australian society—whilst, at the same time showing, through the experiences of their heroines, that some 'freedoms' do not extend to women.
None of the authors openly challenge the conventions that determine the restrictions on a girl's opportunities, rather by continually writing about non-conformists, they imply a challenge to conventional wisdom about girls' needs. Men, love, marriage and domestic responsibilities are pictured as threats to individual endeavour - or as Lilian Turner represents this 'war' - as reality impinging, and eventually overwhelming, the romantic dreams of fame and fortune.

Lilian's heroine, Betty, escapes domestic life and love, but one feels she will eventually be 'caught'. In Ethel Turner's *Flower o' the Pine*, Elizabeth is finally convinced that her aims are less attractive once attained, particularly when she compares the achievement of her University degree to the challenge of housework. In the *Teens* trilogy, Lennie and Mabel are first leftoptimistically anticipating the future, then Lennie is disappointed and tied to the home, then she is free and ambitious once more, and finally she abandons literary success and marries. In these novels, and indeed in all their novels, the three authors acknowledge the attraction of a free and independent life, but are unsure of either the propriety, or of the eventual satisfaction, of such a life for girls. All three authors picture 'woman's work', as essential to the smooth running of society, and as sometimes rewarding to the individual, but a
major problem for all three, is the apparent incompatibility of creative endeavour (or even of the manual farm work Honora attempts) with the demands of domestic responsibilities. On the one hand is these authors' belief in the importance of women's traditional duties, and on the other, a reluctance to denigrate these duties in any way by too vigorously criticising aspects they consider unsatisfactory. In the end, their heroines are shown to choose between a career and marriage - and marriage (or some other domestic charge) nearly always wins. Lilian and Ethel Turner married and had careers as writers. Louise Mack also married, but very early in her career left Australia to seek success overseas. Yet, the recurring pattern of thwarted ambition in their novels, and comments in letter and diaries, suggest they were less than happy with their own careers - feeling, as Ethel had written, that too much came in the way of proper dedication to their art. As well, the restrictions of children's fiction and its lack of prestige, frustrated their attempts to write in a manner that might have satisfied them. Out of this frustration and restriction came the particular qualities of their family stories which, while stopping short of rebellion, express considerable dissatisfaction with the situation of the Australian woman. Ethel Turner, Lilian Turner and Louise Mack all experiment with the possibility of change and reform inherent in a new
society, but, like Miss Flora in Ethel's *Judy and Punch*, decide, "It's dangerous work making untried experiments on human beings." 16
The success of my first book created a demand for a sequel, and so began the 'Billabong' series, from which I try to wriggle away, and to which the public and the publishers sternly draw me back...One 'unsolicited testimonial' from an unknown young reader ranks high in my collection. She wrote to tell me of her woe when a favourite pony in one of my books was killed. 'I don't know how you could kill Bobs,' she said. 'I cried so hard that the gold stopping in my front tooth fell out!'

(Mary Grant Bruce, "How I Became A Writer")
The names of Mary Grant Bruce (1878-1958) and Ethel Turner are so often yoked together in writing and discussion of Australian children's fiction that there is perhaps a tendency to regard their work as similar. It is tempting to do so - they both wrote, more or less, for girls; they shared a publisher, Ward, Lock who, as well as provoking some rivalry between the two authors, issued their books in uniform editions, "tins of jam" Turner complained; their books were equally popular as prize-books; the two women were of a similar age and they were both public figures as a result of the success of their children's books. The tendency to use their names almost interchangeably has however, led to some inaccuracies. David Walker, for example, while noting the similarities of their war novels, also writes of both authors associating particular qualities with bush-life and the city, ...

...the bush enhancing good health and wholesome attitudes to authority, the city creating socially harmful behaviour.1

This distinction is certainly true of Bruce's books but not of Turner's, which, although occasionally applauding semi-rural living in the then bushland suburbs of Sydney or holidays in the Blue Mountains, did not equate bush life with good living, neither in a moral nor financial sense.
The personalities and background of the two women were also quite different, a difference that is underlined by a comparison of the magazine articles about them. Unlike Turner, whose appearance encouraged journalists to portray her as a twinkle-eyed girl, even when middle-aged, Bruce was slim and dark, dressed in simple, tailored clothes, chain-smoked and had a deep, well-modulated voice. She was never the subject of articles about her "charming" home and "pretty" children, and if personal characteristics were mentioned, journalists wrote of her "easy, cultured air" and "rich voice". Being a journalist herself no doubt helped to prevent the worst excesses of article writers. Bruce also seemed to have been careful to point out that what she did was hard work, and that writing was a difficult profession to pursue when one also had family responsibilities.

Most of [my] books have been written under heavy pressure of circumstances: war, travel, illness, the job of running a home and children, with the constant interruptions every house-mother knows. That's where a man-writer scores - he doesn't have his finest ideas blown to the winds when a small boy falls out of a tree and needs first-aid: or when your helper - if you are lucky enough to have a helper - cries loudly at your door - 'Mrs Bruce, the Chinaman's here - will you have a cabbage or a cauli?' - just at the moment when you wouldn't care if your family never again even saw a vegetable.

Ethel Turner only made these sorts of complaints in the privacy of her diary, or indirectly through the themes of her novels. Bruce was a model author for her various publishers, so much so that she was held up by
Ward, Lock as a good example to the restless Ethel Turner on several occasions and others commented on the ease of dealing with her:

Thank you very much for your kind, interesting, and constructive reply to my letter. All my authors are being most prompt and helpful in coming into line, and you most of all!

However, Mary Grant Bruce was not as satisfied with children's writing as this might suggest. She often commented that the *Billabong* series was overdone and that it took "a few hundred letters from young folk" to make her return to it. All the same, it seems Bruce was as reluctant as Turner to forego her 'gold-mine'. Bruce found an outlet through her short story and article writing, a career that was established well before children's books made her famous, and the best of her work was published by *Blackwood's Magazine* which paid very well for good work.

Looking at the two authors now, more than half a century after they reached the height of their popularity, it is perhaps easy to overlook the sixteen years between the publication of *Seven Little Australians* and Bruce's first book *A Little Bush Maid* in 1910. In these sixteen years Turner published nineteen books, initiating a major change in the emphasis of the Australian children's book market from boys' adventure stories to family stories. Bruce wrote against a background of an established tradition in
Australian girls' fiction, albeit only sixteen years, which distanced her from the paradigms of foreign girls' literature that formed the basis of Ethel Turner's novels. Bruce's books for girls are very different to those of the Turner sisters or Louise Mack, and represent a new direction in writing for girls - an attempt to widen the opportunities and activities of girl characters in children's books. Her novels are family adventure stories, a type of book that looked back to colonial adventure stories, and forward to the novels of modern authors like Nan Chauncy, Joan Phipson and Patricia Wrightson. Bruce's books need to be closely examined, not only for the attitudes she shares with Ethel Turner and the other early writers of girls' books, but more specifically for the innovations and changes she makes which influence her literary perception of Australian girlhood.

Mary Grant Bruce's popularity rests on her fifteen "Billabong" books. The first of the series, A Little Bush Maid, was published as a serial in the Leader from October 1905 to August 1907, and in book form by Ward, Lock in 1910, and the last, Billabong Riders in 1942. The principal character in the series is Norah Linton, eleven years old in A Little Bush Maid, and a married woman with a young son in Billabong Riders. Billabong is Norah's home, a station property in the Gippsland
region of Victoria, owned and run by her father David Linton, a widower.

The homestead was built on a gentle rise that sloped gradually away on every side; in front to the wide plain, dotted with huge gum trees and great grey box groves, and at the back, after you had passed through the well-kept vegetable garden and orchard, to a long lagoon bordered with trees and fringed with tall bulrushes and waving reeds. (A Little Bush Maid, p7)

Billabong is a little Australian utopia where life is good to the Linton family and to their faithful servants who never complain of their lot in life and, to a man and woman, regard Norah as a most remarkable little girl and Mr Linton the perfect boss. Throughout the fifteen Billabong books, the servants remain the same, the landscape never changes (except for the occasional bushfire), and, indeed, Norah, her elder brother Jim and their friend Wally Meadows, never really grow up. In their relationships with each other (even after Wally and Norah marry), and in the eyes of Mr Linton and the servants, they remain perpetual adolescents. In this unchanging, idyllic world, Mary Grant Bruce creates a type of heroine new to Australian girls' fiction who, whilst remaining faithful to acceptable standards of feminine behaviour, is very much involved with the type of action and event previously reserved for male characters in children's books.

The starting point for the changes Mary Grant Bruce makes to the structure of the family story is
that Norah exists in a man's world - men, their attitudes and work, are central to the Billabong books. Norah's mother is dead and she has no sisters, just one elder brother, Jim. In A Little Bush Maid, Norah's unique character and lifestyle is attributed to the lack of other women and girls in her life.

She had grown just as the bush wild flowers grow-hardy unchecked, almost untended; for, though old nurse had always been there, her nurseling had gone her own way from the time she could toddle...All her life Norah had done pretty well whatever she wanted—which meant that she had lived out of doors, followed in Jim's footsteps wherever practicable (and in a good many ways most people would have thought distinctly impracticable), and spent about two-thirds of her waking time on horseback. But the spoiling was not of a very harmful kind. Her chosen pursuits brought her under the unspoken discipline of the work of the station, wherein ordinary instinct taught her to do as others did, and conform to their ways. She had all the dread of being thought 'silly' that marks the girl who imitates boyish ways. Jim's rare growl, 'Have a little sense!' went farther home than a whole volume of admonitions of a more ordinarily genuine feminine type. (A Little Bush Maid, pp12-13)

Norah finds other little girls boring and their ways strange, and prefers the company of Jim's schoolfriends. Most of all, Norah is her father's 'mate'.

Day after day they were together, riding over the run, working the cattle, walking through the thick scrub of the backwater, driving young, half-broken horses in the high dog-cart to Cunjee—they were rarely apart. (A Little Bush Maid, p14)

However, throughout the books there is the implication that Norah's individuality is threatened by those outside the Billabong world; governesses, aunts,
schools and schoolgirls who are waiting to destroy Norah's unique style of girlhood.

Outsiders—mothers of prim daughters, whom Norah pictured as finding their wildest excitement in 'patting a doll'—were wont to deplore that the only daughter of David Linton of Billabong was brought up in an eccentric fashion, less girl than boy; but outsiders are apt to cherish delusions...10

'I suppose I'll have a governess some day, and she won't let me ride astride, or go after the cattle, or climb trees, or do anything worth doing, and everything will be perfectly hateful. It's simply beastly to be getting old!' (A Little Bush Maid, p142)

It is generally other women who are pictured as wanting to impose a particular role on Norah, the suggestion being that living in a man's world has improved Norah considerably, freeing her from what Bruce tends to regard as the superficial aspects of femininity. What these aspects are is never really very clearly defined - "silliness", playing with dolls, "prattling", skipping, dressing-up and "playing ladies" being amongst the supposedly common pursuits of little girls that are foreign to Norah. Norah however is quite definately not a little boy. She wears a "neat divided skirt" which looked "nice on horseback" whereas the boys, "were dressed without regard to appearances". Norah is also accomplished in domestic matters:

by the time Norah was eleven she knew more of cooking and general housekeeping than many girls grown up and fancying themselves ready to undertake houses of their own. Moreover, she could sew rather well, though she frankly detested
the accomplishment. The one form of work she cared for was knitting, and it was her boast that her father wore only the socks she manufactured for him. (A Little Bush Maid, p15)

That Norah's hands could capably deal with both knitting needles and a stockwhip overcomes the difficulties faced by other heroines of girls' books, whose talents were often offset by some inability to dress neatly or perform domestic tasks. For Norah, having supposedly male characteristics and skills, does not diminish her femaleness. Traditional heroines like Jo March of Little Women, have little scope within their domestic circle to assert their individuality and their contempt for the vain frippery attached to being a woman, and Jo trivialises her specialness by adopting outwardly boyish habits such as whistling and lying on the rug. Norah has more tangible opportunities for showing off her capabilities, and she not only joins the boys in all their activities - she is better at most tasks and activities than they. In A Little Bush Maid Norah has the greatest handicap in a horse race because she is expected to win. In the same race it is Jim who falls from his mount and marrs the race. Norah is no wet blanket on adventures.

Norah differs most from the heroines of other girls' books, both Australian and foreign, in that she is not ambitious. She is quite content to remain forever at Billabong, racing Bobs over fences and
helping Brownie, Billabong's motherly cook, in the kitchen. Norah is not troubled by a 'creative spirit' which might assail her at moments when she is supposed to be feeding a baby or tending a fire as it does with the hapless Betty Bruce, or tormented by the type of fiend which makes Judy Woolcot scare little boys into fits by telling them they have eaten poisoned chocolates. In fact, Norah as a character is a trifle boring, as are all the major characters in Bruce's Billabong books. There is no conflict between people and their surroundings, no adjustments to be made, no hardships or inner struggles. In Billabong, Bruce creates a world to fit Norah, unlike other girls' books where the central theme is usually the struggles of an unusual girl against antagonistic surroundings. A comparison between Norah and Judy Woolcot is an exercise in contrasts. Judy continually pushes herself to the very edges of social and parental acceptance, always fighting to escape the limits of girlhood, and being continually hauled back by disapproving adults. Norah has a far calmer progress through life, and she fits comfortably into her family and surroundings. The plot revolves around adventures with the physical world, not conflicts with family and society, and as a result the development of characters plays a minor role in the Billabong books. The Bulletin regarded Bruce's approach to writing as pleasant, but uninspiring, they
much preferred their early find, Ethel Turner, whom they could not praise enough.

Her [Bruce's] readers want nothing more than this leisurely painting of station life; and they will gladly read a whole chapter devoted to the breaking in of a bucking colt, though the incident is merely incidental...There is no need, either, of any development of character in the nice but colorless persons she introduces to us...Ethel Turner is in a higher class...11

What the Bulletin fails to note however, is that within this background of a fairly realistic (although idealistic) painting of station life, the character of Norah is sufficiently drawn to allow girl readers to identify closely with the heroine. In 1958 a "Tribute to Mary Grant Bruce" was printed in the Bulletin, in which they noted "the nostalgic memories of many an Australian woman are expressed".

Mary Grant Bruce, writer of the Billabong books, who died recently in Sussex (Eng.), will be mourned by many friends, but by none more sincerely than by those women, now in their fifties, who were contemporaries of 'Norah'. We grew up with Norah, from her first appearance as A Little Bush Maid in 1910. She was so much more than a character in the pages of a book--she was Us, as we liked to fancy ourselves in supreme moments of idealism.

Mary Grant Bruce had a lot to answer for. She and Norah did more to mould our characters than home and church, State and school combined.12

Whereas heroines such as Judy Woolcot, Betty Bruce and Lennie Leighton no doubt provided much inspiration and perhaps comfort for girl readers, Norah with her uncomplicated reactions allowed readers to interpret their own experience in terms of her moral and social creed. As with famous boy heroes of adventure books,
one could 'be' Norah because her character was composed chiefly of action and event. She is a very positive role model in that her activities are rarely frustrated - the protection of Billabong sees to that. In creating Norah, Bruce borrowed many of the characteristics of Australian girls that the Turner sisters and Mack had used to distinguish their heroines from foreign paradigms - resourcefulness, courage, independence - but by ignoring the creative and ambitious characteristics that went along with these, Bruce built the foundations of a new stereotype in Norah. This stereotype has its roots in Australian literary portraits of men, and Norah owes more to A.B. Paterson's archetypal Australian than to the youthful ambitions and desires of Judy Woolcot. Brenda Niall draws this comparison with a slightly different emphasis:

Paterson's outback hero, Charley Gordon, is described in terms which anticipate the men of the Billabong novels...Mary Grant Bruce's Jim Linton, tall and lean, with deep-set eyes, accustomed to looking into far distances, is built on the Charley Gordon plan. But Jim is the outback hero as a boy, seen in the context of family life. Mary Grant Bruce thus linked the archetypal hero of the Australian bush with the schoolboy brother of domestic fiction. Jim is less remote than Charley Gordon; with Norah, his feminine counterpart, he remains well within the child's range of identification without losing heroic status.13

As Norah is without doubt the principal character of at least the first few Billabong books, the link between
her and the Paterson hero is more significant.

She was tall for her fourteen years, and very slender-'scraggy' Jim was wont to say...Norah bore the epithet meekly - she held the view that it was better to be dead than fat. There was something boyish in the straight, slim figure in the blue linen frock-perhaps the quality was also to be found in a frank manner that was the product of years of the Bush and open air life. The grey eyes were steady, and met those of others with a straight level glance; the mouth was a little firm-set for her years, but the child was revealed when it broke into smiles-and Norah was rarely grave. (Mates At Billabong, p11)

That Norah is not a boy, despite her boyish figure and active life-style, provides the main interest in the Billabong books for girl readers. Ironically, it is the handicaps and restrictions imposed on Norah because she is a little girl that lead to her most exciting adventures. Regardless of Norah's freedoms, in the Billabong world male and female roles are fairly strictly defined, and Norah is excluded from some station work.

There were visits of inspection to be made to the farthest portions of the run, and busy days in the yards, when the men worked at drafting the stock and Norah sat perched on the high 'cap' of the fence and, watching with all her eager little soul in her eyes, wished heartily that she had been born a boy. (A Little Bush Maid, pp185-186)

In Jim's account of their last bushfire in A Little Bush Maid however, there seems to be the suggestion that there is little good reason for excluding Norah from anything. Even although Mr Linton makes her stay behind while he, Jim and the men go to fight the fire,
it is Norah who saves the valuable Shropshire sheep single-handed.

...her only thought at first was that Dad would think she had broken her promise to him. She looked up at him in the first few minutes with her poor, swollen old eyes. 'I didn't forget my promise, Dad, dear,' she said. 'I never touched the fire-only chased your silly sheep!' (A Little Bush Maid, p78)

In subsequent books this type of incident occurs again and again. Mr Linton and Jim, it seems, can never learn that Norah can't be kept out of any adventure! Bruce, however, does not use Norah's superiority and commonsense to show-up the foolishness of men's insistence that women, and Norah in particular, are unsuited for certain activities. At Billabong men follow a very strict code of chivalry and inspite of all the evidence to the contrary, the Billabong characters stay true to the assumption of feminine weakness.

'Take that parcel from Auntie Tommy, Davie - it's too big for her.' He whirled around. 'You shouldn't cally big fings like vat,' he said sternly, grasping the parcel - somewhat astonished to find it weighed much less than he expected. Brownie had already noted that it dangled by its loop from one of Tommy's fingers, and might therefore be carried by a gentleman four years old. She believed in the Billabong doctrine that men couldn't be trained too early to look after their women-folk. (Billabong Riders, p18)

This flaw in Norah's paradise does not worry her a great deal however, and in the true Billabong spirit
she resigns herself to being dealt the cruelest of Nature's blows - being born a girl!

Norah wished dismally that she had been born a boy, with the prospect of a journey, and mates, and school, and 'no end of larks'. Then she thought of Dad, and though still dismal, unwished the wish, and was content to remain a girl. (A Little Bush Maid, p159)

Norah does 'remain a girl' through to the last book in the series, Billabong Riders, when she is married to Wally and has a young son, Davie. Living as a young woman on Billabong protects Norah from the most extreme changes other literary heroines have to make in growing from girls to women, however as Norah grows older the refrain "Tell the ladies to keep well out" is heard more often. Possibly the most telling aspect of Billabong Riders is that there is no little Norah to carry on: Norah has a son and adopts another boy, Rob, who inherits Norah's role as the hero of the day in spite of being told to stay home. It is a certainty that unlike Norah, Rob, having proved his worth, will never be kept out of any station activities again.

Norah's character and the world of Billabong are influenced by Mary Grant Bruce's preference for a certain type of children's book, her emotional attachment to Australian country life, and her belief that this way of life was of benefit to women, more particularly, young women and girls. Like Ethel Turner, Bruce often pursued the theme that Australian
girls and women were somehow better than English women because of the special conditions of life in Australia. In *Back to Billabong* (1921) the English girl, Tommy Rainham, is much changed after a few short months near Billabong:

She [Tommy] had spent so much time in the saddle that she now rode like an old hand; the brown-faced girl who came up the paddock presently with the cheery band of workers was very different to the pink and white 'little Miss Immigrant' of eight months before.14

Her brother Bob attributes Tommy's newly gained independence to the 'climate'.

'It's something in your climate, I think, because she was never so cheeky at home-meek was more the word to describe her.'

'Meek!' said his sister indignantly. 'Indeed, I never was meek in my life!'

'Indeed you were, and it was very becoming,' Bob assured her. 'Now you are more like a suffragette-

'He stopped, staring. 'Why, that's it! it must be in the air! She knows she'll have the vote pretty soon!' He broke into laughter. 'Glory! Fancy little Tommy with a vote!' (*Back to Billabong*, p204)

Norah is however generally pictured as superior to other Australian girls, so much so that girls outside Billabong seem no different to English girls despite numerous remarks regarding the virtues of Australian women. It is the general antagonism towards, and constant criticism of women outside Billabong that takes a good deal away from the positive aspects of Norah's character. The reasons for these criticisms appears to be that they are used to emphasise Norah's special qualities, and result from the maleness of the Australian bush ethos. The Turner sisters and Louise
Mack used foreign paradigms as foils to enhance their Australian heroines' qualities. Bruce however, in creating new opportunities for her heroine, moves away from the patterns of foreign family stories to comparisons that involve perceived differences between country and city life. With station life seen in terms of male virtues, 'womanly ways' tend to be associated with the city, the source of all bad qualities recognised by the Billabong books. To a lesser extent than Norah, 'rebels' such as Judy Woolcot and Betty Bruce are shown to be different (and better) than the usual type of girl because of certain 'mannish' characteristics. The Turner sisters and Mack appear to have been aware that in associating their heroines with male values they might subsequently undermine female values - something they wished to avoid. To compensate for this, all their books have admirable characters who fulfil the traditional female role and, at the same time, include numerous examples of incompetent male characters. Tensions apparent in all these books result from the knowledge that in spite of the capability of the 'traditional' and 'rebellious' women characters, the bumbling fathers and priggish brothers have the real power and influence. In a world of very competent men however, Norah's achievements reflect unfavourably on the perceived incompetence of other women who don't understand horses and could not round-up cattle if their lives depended on it. Like Ethel
Turner, Bruce objected to women who lead frivolous or petty lives, but in the terms of the Billabong world this objection was translated into an association of pettiness with women in general. In *Jim and Wally* (1916) the contradiction between the supposed virtues of Australian women and the use of femininity to denote weakness and degradation is emphasised by the prominence war gives to the activities and opinions of Jim Linton and other men. On a boat to Ireland an Irish priest talks with Jim and Mr Linton:

'It's your day,' he said; 'a great world just now for young men. And they tell me there's any number of them out of khaki yet - standing behind counters and selling lace and ribbons; and some of them doing women's hair! More shame for the women that let them!' 'If a man wants to stay out of the game and do women's work, well that's all he's fit for,' said Jim slowly. 'He's not wanted where there's work going. But he ought to have some sort of brand put on him, so that people will be able to tell him from a man in future!'...'Petticoats are the brand he wants,'..."

Three pages later, Mr Linton praises the courage and adaptability of women, to the same priest:

'It was themselves needed great hearts-those pioneer women,' said the priest. 'They did; and mostly they had great hearts. But then I think most women have, if the need really comes,' Mr Linton said. 'Thousands of them were delicate, tenderly-reared women, with no experience of bush conditions in a new country; but they made good. Women have a curious way of finding themselves able to tackle any conditions with which they are actually faced...' *(Jim and Wally*, pp64-5)

In girls' books, one comes to expect some degree of biographical detail on the part of the author. In
the works of Ethel Turner, Lilian Turner and Louise Mack this is easy to find, and is often a reflection of the author's own girlhood ambitions and disappointments. This link between the heroine and the author does not exist in the same way in the Billabong books. Mary Grant Bruce was born Minnie Grant Bruce on the 24th May, 1878 at Sale, a country town in the Gippsland region of Victoria. She was a country girl, but not 'of the land'. Her father Eyre Lewis Bruce was a surveyor, but her mother Mary Atkinson Whittakers was the daughter of a farmer, and "Minnie's" experience of farm life, pictured in the Billabong books, came from her visits to her grandfather's property. From a very young age Bruce was an avid reader and attempted to write poems and stories, "If it had not been that one-half of me was all for horses and the bush, I think I should have been a horrible little book-worm." When she was twenty, Mary Grant Bruce moved to Melbourne, eventually joining the literary staff of the Age and the Leader, and never again lived in the country for any very extended period of time. Norah represents the type of girl city-dwelling Bruce felt she should have been. Both in her books and the few pieces on her own life, Bruce portrays literary pursuits as somehow unhealthy or unnatural. In A Little Bush Maid, Norah's
poor education is almost something to be celebrated.

'I won't have her bothered with books too early,' Mr Linton had said when nurse hinted, on Norah's eighth birthday, that it was time she began the rudiments of learning. 'Time enough yet—we don't want to make a bookworm of her!' (A Little Bush Maid, p14)

In Mates at Billabong, the lavendar clad villain from the city, Cecil Linton, gives Norah a book of poetry which she doesn't understand at all. This objection to reading is also carried through to Bruce's other books.

In The Houses of the Eagle (1925) the Browne family is very troubled by their son John's attraction to books, his appetite for reading having an inverse relationship to his poor appetite for food and subsequent illnesses. In a magazine article, "How I Became a Writer", Bruce describes her first attempt at writing.

I learned to read when I was three, and from that time consumed voraciously every book that came in my way, and every line of poetry. At six I was writing weird little verses, that only my mother saw. I have forgotten them all, but I have a vivid and anxious memory of my first long poem when I was seven years old, a somewhat-lonely small child, on a long visit to my grandfather's station. It was a mighty epic, written on the blank backs of London 'Punch' cartoons, and it dealt with the alleged insanity of the Czar of Russia...I wrote it in fear and trembling lest I should be discovered, and, since my infant possessions were at any time liable to inspection by my aunts, I used to hide it—a somewhat bulky manuscript, as I remember—under the step of a porch. My father came to fetch me home rather unexpectedly, and in the hurry of departure I forgot to retrieve the Russian ode, and for a year went through agonies of anxiety about it, picturing it discovered and ridiculed.
All Bruce's accounts of her reading and writing seemed tinged with a sense of guilt, and it is only possible to surmise, due to a lack of evidence, that this guilt grew because of some distaste for creative endeavour or pursuits within her family. However, it appears Bruce's mother, at least, was very supportive of her writing and proud of her daughter's achievements.

My mother had grounded me well, making me keen on expression in varied forms, and giving me a 'feeling' for decent English...

Print had become a common occurrence to me, but a truly-book was another matter. I did not realise it as a solid fact until I gave my advance-copy of 'A Little Bush Maid' to my mother, and saw her face.

As I look back, it seems to me that I have been extraordinarily lucky. First, and always, in the help of a mother whose sympathy and perfect comprehension never failed...19

It was Mrs Bruce senior too, who supported Mary's wish for a career.

I was twenty when I left Gippsland to seek my fortune in Melbourne, much against my father's will. There were not many 'bachelor girls' then, and he feared all kinds of disasters for me; but my mother begged that I should have my chance, and so, at last, I went—with a heart full of assorted ambitions, and £5 in my pocket.20

Norah of course has no mother to exert this sort of influence. Bruce's picture of bush mothers in an article for a London paper, suggests her awareness of some of the inadequacies of country life for older
women and therefore may indicate why there is no Billabong mother.

Rarely, however does the bush loneliness occur to the children. They find life so full and so very good that they fail to comprehend another existence. Mother may come out upon the verandha in the evening and stand looking across the hills with wistful eyes and a heart very far away; but the brown-faced youngsters, racing their ponies up the homestead rise, never knew why.21

There is no room for such softness as "wistfulness" on Billabong, and a mother with thoughts beyond the brown paddocks would be a liability. In contrast, when Ethel Turner thought of the bush, her first thoughts were for the sufferings of the women.

...how can we swim and surf with happy minds this summer, and remember the women and children of the west tortured by the heat and flies, and by monotony - that arch fiend of torturers?22

Although rarely reflected in her books, Bruce was keenly interested in the position of women. One article, "Her Just Necessities", argued that women should make arrangements for partial control of the family income prior to marriage "...very often the marriages where all thought of business considerations are carefully excluded are the very ones that cause trouble along those lines afterwards."23

However, the issues that interested her as a city-based journalist, and later as a celebrated author, are not part of the Billabong world. As Niall points out, "Mary Grant Bruce lived one life and wrote about another - the one she might have expected if she had
been 'an ordinary country girl'."24 Like Paterson, Bruce wrote nostalgically about the 'bush' from the perspective of a sympathetic observer whose longing for country life was never strong enough to result in a move from the city.25 Her emotional attachment to the bush was perhaps coloured by the early death of her brother Paddy at the age of eight. Certainly this seems to have influenced the portrayal of close brother and sister relationships in the Billabong books. More than that however, the loss of her principal childhood companion appears to have resulted in the Billabong books upholding the sort of lifestyle and attitudes Paddy may have endorsed. Leaving speculation aside however, for whatever reason, Bruce felt strongly that an active, physical, country life was both morally superior and more 'Australian' than the intellectual city life she herself preferred.

In her attempt to widen the opportunities and activities of girl characters in children's books, Bruce has Norah live the sort of adventures that the heroines of previous Australian girls' books only dreamt and romanced about. Whereas pretending and play by Turner and Mack heroines is an early feature of their developing creativity and later literary pursuits, Norah never pretends to be anybody other than herself or anywhere but at Billabong. All Norah's talents, skills and attitudes are present, fully formed
at the age of eleven. Her whole world revolves around practical skills and commonsense which are shown to be gained from participation in a male world, with the addition of several feminine accomplishments learnt from Brownie. Conversely, the capabilities of the Turner and Mack heroines stem from the experiences open to them as little girls, experiences that are pictured as ordinarily available to Australian girls, and which are associated with a female world. The use Phyl and Dolly make of their dolls in Ethel Turner's *Three Little Maids*, contrasts with Norah's picture of little girls "patting" dolls.

There was hardly an adventure of hero and heroine of all the strange miscellany of books devoured by the little pair that those unemotional little dolls had not been through. They had been lowered by knotted handkerchiefs from the highest windows in the house, both as princesses running away with fairy princes, and as heroines escaping from burning hotels. They had had their internal sawdust badly congested by being forced to swim across the narrow ditch of water that ran below the currant-bushes and formed an enchanted castle's moat. They had been hanged by the neck, shut up in a disused bird-cage called the Bastille, buried up to their necks, plants for a Nero's eyes to gaze upon, placed in an arena to meet with fortitude the Christian martyr's death from ravening lions.

But hitherto, when eight o'clock came, Romance's wings had always fallen to, and fingers, merely loving and maternal now, had soothed and comforted the racked bodies, clad them in night-gowns of most patient work, and laid them to rest in the most elaborate and comfortable of all the little beds.26

Phyl and Dolly go on to use their childhood romancing as an apprenticeship for their careers as writers.

Indeed their dual use of dolls as pretend babies and as
wildly romantic players in their fantasies presages divisions in their adult lives, when the heroines are usually faced with what is presented as a difficult choice between family life and careers. Norah has neither the romancing nor any difficult choices to make in her life and yet her character becomes less central to the Billabong books once she is a young woman.

Bruce, transversing quite a different route, nevertheless comes across the same difficulties in sustaining her heroine's character as the Turner sisters and Mack. Only the fences of Billabong and the Linton's lack of sensibility maintain an almost unchanged Norah to the last book.

Bruce shares with Ethel Turner, Lilian Turner, and Louise Mack a desire to defy stereotypical pictures of girls as passive or silly, roles that heroines rarely play in books written for girls but which are a prominent feature of boys' books and those written for children in general. In the Billabong books however, Bruce works from the premise that most girls are silly and that Norah is exceptional, an attitude that reflects Bruce's adoption of both the features of boys' adventure books (concentration on action and event rather than on character) and the assumptions about women characteristic of that genre. In a 1939 magazine
interview, Bruce indicated her main objection to girls' books.

'Hundreds of children all over Australia clamoured for my Norah, so - well, I went on writing books. I was very firm about one point, however, and that was that there should be no love interest in them. I was more or less forced into marrying off Norah and Wally eventually, but beyond that I drew the line.'27

Norah's marriage does however diminish her independence quite markedly. In Billabong Adventures(1927) where Norah marries Wally, the first few chapters are given over to emphasising that despite the marriage, nothing will change on Billabong ("...we all belong to each other on Billabong, and we can't alter.") and that this marriage, like everything else Norah does, will clash with 'outsiders' visions of what is proper.

'...I'm ever so hungry. I don't believe I'm a proper bride, after all!' 'Certainly you're not,' said Jim, looking at her severely. 'All the brides I ever heard of toyed delicately with their food on their wedding-day, with recourse to smelling-salts between nibbles. And their women friends are supposed to gather round their pale forms, to braid their hair and make sure they're not shaky on the responses in the service, and other homely duties. How are you on ther responses, Nor? I don't believe you've ever studied them!...It's not a proper wedding,' mourned Jim. 'I doubt it will never be legal!'28

Notwithstanding Norah's refusal to indulge in what is seen as 'ordinary' womanly behaviour, she does defer to Wally once they are married. The central issues of other girls' books - what type of women girls will become, and what choices they have to make in their lives - hover around the borders of Billabong and
whilst it is maintained that little changes with Norah, the reader is aware that her life-style is somehow compromised once she marries, and that her seeming independence is artificially maintained. The Billabong books establish a useful argument against those critics who identify romance and sentimentality as the major feature of girls' books, and others who maintain that this feature dictates the actions of the heroine. Both Bruce and Ethel Turner, the first rigorously eschewing sentiment and the latter decidedly sentimental, share an underlying concern for the possibilities for girls, and how girls can achieve their potential without outlawing themselves from their society. It is this concern which dictates the actions of the heroines. Bruce tries to overcome the difficulties of looking to Norah's future by maintaining her as the very mature and developed character she was at eleven. Norah has no lessons to learn from her experiences, but nevertheless the Billabong books are didactic in that certain values are stressed over and over again, values that Bruce obviously felt could be usefully applied by girl-readers to their own conduct and outlook.

Norah Linton is in many ways a very different personality to Judy Woolcot, Betty Bruce, or Lennie Leighton. Norah is a tomboy not because she is reacting against her femininity, but because she is part of a male world. Her tomboyish ways arise out of
the circumstances of her upbringing. Norah's allies are men and her enemies other women, whereas Turner's and Mack's heroines usually have to overcome the prejudices of their fathers and brothers. Whereas Ethel Turner's great contribution was in portraying women in urban life when the overwhelming bulk of Australian literature concentrated on men and country life, Mary Grant Bruce's Billabong books introduced a major girl character into an ostensibly Australian male world. Norah contributes a new aspect to the Australian heroine that appears more identifiably 'Australian' and yet at the same time is removed from the actual experience of the majority of Australian girls. In linking the family story with the adventure book, Bruce opened up new opportunities for the heroine but in the Billabong books this was at the cost of a positive picture of women in general. The character of Norah provides for the possibility of new directions in girls' literature, but with mixed implications for the literary image of Australian girlhood.
"P.S. I noticed at David Jones sale the other day a large table full of my daughter's books, together with some of my own, my sister's and Miss Peacock's. They were marked down to 2/6. Can you tell how this came about?"

(Ethel Turner to Mr. Bligh, Ward, Lock 1936)
With the publication of Mary Grant Bruce's last book, *Billabong Riders*, in 1942 the 'Turner era' came to an end and along with it, the end of Ward, Lock's dominance of the Australian children's book market. Ethel Turner's popularity had declined since the late 1920's and gradually the majority of books by her, Bruce, Lilian Turner, and Louise Mack went out of print. After Bruce, no major writers of girls' fiction appeared in Australia until the 1950's when, as had happened in the 1890's, developments in girls' family stories initiated changes and re-vitalised the whole body of Australian children's literature.

Four writers who were part of the 1950's revival and who are still prominent children's writers today - Joan Phipson, Eleanor Spence, Mavis Thorpe Clarke and Hesba Brinsmead - are examined in later chapters. The word 'revival' however is somewhat misleading, in that it gives an impression of a sudden flourishing of talent. This was not so, rather the foundations for this impetus were laid down over many years and when new and popular writers did emerge in the early 1950's, attitudes towards children's literature had changed considerably since the turn of the century. These new authors' books were housed in libraries specifically set up for children, and their work was assessed and promoted by groups and by individuals with specialised
knowledge of, and interest in children's literature. No single author in the 1950's prompted the excitement and accolades that greeted *Seven Little Australians* sixty years earlier, but the more sober welcome was backed with attitudes to children's fiction that were to have as significant an impact on Australian children's literature as Turner's first book.

A thorough examination of all the elements that brought new life to Australian children's literature would be a major study in itself. Here, a few of the more significant events will be noted, and the previously unacknowledged contribution of the *New South Wales School Magazine* to the modern era in Australian children's literature will be assessed. As well as 'extra-literary' concerns, the girls' fiction of these bridging years must be examined. During the two decades 1930 to 1950, which can serve as an approximate definition of the 'bridging' years, many authors wrote for girls. Although none of the books were particularly distinguished, they are an important link between the two major movements in girls' literature, and an examination of them corrects any impression that the authors of the 1950's rose out of a bare landscape. As Virginia Woolf has commented in regard to lesser
It is true that the fate of lesser shades is always a little precarious, they are so easily obscured or distorted...perhaps it is not a head of the best period that we rub clean in the end, but only the chip of an old pot.3

The years 1930 to 1950 were in some ways dull years for Australian children's fiction. The depression, followed by the war, had some effect, both in terms of sales and in limiting the quality and quantity of publishing (although restrictions on overseas publishing contributed to an upsurge in Australian publishing),4 as well as distracting authors from a commitment to children's writing. Australian children's literature in the decade prior to the war consisted mostly of fairy stories and picture books intended for young children. This was the heyday of the Rentoul-Outhwaites, May Gibbs and Dorothy Wall. During the war, and for some years after, the illustrated fairy book outnumbered children's novels. Books by Peg Maltby (Peg's Fairy Book, 1944), Pixie O'Harris (Pearl Pinkie and Sea Greenie, 1935) and Helen Alderson (Foamo Bubblo: Fairyland for Little Folk, 1942) owed much to the English fairy-story tradition, resulting in an incongruous mix of buttercups and gum blossom. The influence of English children's literature was apparent in literature for older children as well. H.M. Saxby, quoting Frank Eyre and Marcus Crouch, notes
the dominance of the English school story, "the grey mass of school stories", both as an imported product and as an influence on the sort of novels produced by Australian writers.5 Brenda Niall, in comparing an Australian school story, Constance Mackness' Miss Pickle (1924), to English books such as Dorita Fairlie Bruce's Dimsie series notes,

In 1948, when the wartime paper shortages still restricted publishing enterprise, Oxford University Press reissued Miss Pickle with the Dimsie books and some Biggles titles in a special Australian five-shilling edition published in Melbourne. Formula fiction must have seemed the safest choice in a period of restraint. There was no incongruity in placing the Australian and the English volumes side by side.6

Australian girls' family stories survived precariously during these years, sustained by the continuing, but declining, popularity of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce, and by a number of authors who repeated the themes and patterns established by these two writers. Books like Constance Mackness' Di-Double-Di (1929) were a hybrid, bred of the dual influence of Turner and Bruce on the one hand, and the British girls' school story on the other.7 The story is based on the activities of two girls (both called Diana) at a Sydney boarding school, Brentwood College. There is not really any major plot, rather various minor story lines reflect a proliferation of literary influences. Diana Brand (nicknamed 'Monkey') is the school scamp, very clever and cheeky, but generally liked by her
teachers with the exception of Miss Templeton who betrays her own "low-breeding" by outbursts of temper over Monkey's tricks. Convinced by a crippled man, who the two Dianas meet in his garden when climbing through a gap in the school fence, that Cordelia from King Lear represents perfection of the human soul, Monkey tries a conciliatory approach to Miss Templeton. Teacher and student eventually come to admire each other, Monkey being specially influenced by Miss Templeton's love of literature to want to become a writer. As well there are scenes set on the outback properties of the two Dianas' homes; the crippled man belongs to a family dominated by a grasping spoilt matriarch from whose clutches he and his beautiful niece are eventually freed; several eating binges are carefully detailed, along with close descriptions of clothes and complexions and, finally, everyone single and of a suitable age is married off, and the book ends with the two Dianas contemplating their success at school prize night and looking back over an eventful year and forward to the long holidays.

Apart from this sort of book however, there were a number of novels which did not rely on a background of school life and were more identifiably family stories. Three girls' novels from the forties, Pixie O'Harris' The Fortunes of Poppy Treloar (1941), Nance Donkin's No Medals for Meg (1947), and Dora Birtles' Pioneer Shack
(1947), reflect the sort of themes and patterns evident in most family stories of this time. Meg, Poppy and Elsa, the heroine of Pioneer Shack, are all very resourceful girls. Poppy runs away from home in a bid to live independently of her adoptive parents and eventually inherits a fortune, Meg solves the mystery of the family's housekeeper's forgotten past, and Elsa, almost singlehandedly, obtains land and builds a house for her family. No Medals for Meg is a tame chronicle of everyday life, while in contrast, Poppy Treloar is characterised by very exciting, but highly improbable adventures. Saxby has described these books as "trivial" and "far-fetched", but they are not without some attraction.

However, the characterisation is poor and superficial, and the plots too contrived to result in a very satisfactory whole. A remark by Meg indicates the sort of 'chatter' in No Medals for Meg and the type of offhand comment that in earlier girls' books would have been dealt with at greater length.

'I say, what do you think of the new Maths. teacher? Rather a pet, isn't she?'

At the thought of the new Maths. teacher, who had smoothly-rolled blonde hair, deep blue eyes and was beautifully dressed, Lois rolled her eyes, an accomplishment for which she was always much envied, and said 'Oh, RATHER! She's just like something out of a film, isn't she?'... and Meg asked didn't they think it unusual to have a MATHS. teacher who was so pretty. She could never remember having seen a beautiful Maths. teacher before. Somehow or other, the very brainy teachers never seemed to be the most beautiful ones, did they? (No Medals for Meg, pp123-4)
Dora Birtles' **Pioneer Shack** treads a path between the dullness of *No Medals for Meg* and the excesses of *Poppy*. The fifteen year old heroine, Elsa Graham, is the competent person in her household which has fallen on hard times. Everyone leans on Elsa – her father is an invalid, her mother, brought up as a 'society girl', is a poor housekeeper, her sister Roslyn is very young, and her brother John, being a boy, is not expected to be of much help. When coping with yet another family crisis, Elsa exclaims,

'Everyone is crying on me,'...first Mother, then Roslyn, and I almost cried on my own shoulder, myself, to-day!' (Pioneer Shack, p71)

The plot stems from Elsa's interest in some land her grandfather had acquired many years before, given to him by a Newcastle tailor as a special offer on the purchase of a suit, "Land was cheap in those days, and the advertisement a splendid one". When the council sells the land to re-coup rates owed, Elsa bids successfully for it after scraping together some money. Her ambition is to build a house for her family, a place to live with space and comfort away from their ramshackle flat in the city. She designs a house, built from stone available on the block, and by the conclusion of the book the house is half built, with every indication that it will be finished one day. Saxby describes **Pioneer Shack** as "well-loved and much-read" and certainly the Crusoe-like theme is very attractive.10 Elsa's single-minded ambition to build a
house provides an unwavering focus for the book, unlike some earlier girls' books where often the heroine's ambitions become somewhat diffuse towards the conclusion of the story. This type of interest is needed to replace the social conflicts of earlier heroines. Elsa does at times complain about her domestic burdens,

'Nobody darns my stockings for me, nobody looks after my clothes and things. Everything in this house is run to suit Ron. I have to run round finding your socks and John's, and his, and never get time to mend my own. I'm just a servant, that's all.'

'Oh, Elsa,' protested the shocked Roslyn, 'you're not.' (Pioneer Shack, p41)

However this rare outburst is balanced a few pages on by a weekend away for Elsa and a new dress carefully made by her mother. This sort of incident is reminiscent of Ethel Turner's suggestion in Jennifer J that the burdens of domesticity can be lessened if the sufferer is "carefully let off the chain from time to time, and then probably the cussedness wouldn't ferment to any serious extent".11

Elsa is not a rebel. It is her friend Marjorie, a relatively minor character in the novel, who follows the 'traditional' pattern.

...Marjorie Tennant was a tall dark girl whose long and skinny arms and legs were in perpetual motion, and whose angular body never settled comfortably into any position but poked out in unnatural contortions. When she walked, gesticulating, down a corridor, she looked like a
human windmill. She was full of energy, and very intelligent, but could not control her enthusiasms or settle down to a dull steady grind at lessons...Marjorie was always full of schemes. (Pioneer Shack, p38)

Although Marjorie displays all the stock characteristics of the tomboy heroine, her role is only to act as a foil to Elsa's steadier and less colourful personality - Marjorie's own development is negligible. Both Elsa, and Meg from No Medals For Meg, exhibit a degree of intelligence, self-confidence, and dogged determination characteristic of previous heroines in family stories. However, whilst lively, outgoing, enthusiastic and ambitious, these girls are not feverishly active like Ethelred May and Judy Woolcot, or untidy and careless like Jo March, Katy Carr and Betty Bruce. These negative characteristics in past heroines, although over-used and apparently superficial, were the outward signs of rebellion, and Meg and Elsa lack the sparkle of insurrection. Elsa is related to a sort of character familiar to readers of school stories who - if not the school captain admired by all - plays a role in helping the 'littlies', is sympathetic to the needs of the Lower Fourth and whose surname is invariably 'Grey' or 'Grayson'. This type of character never does much in school stories although her calm and pleasant nature is admired by the heroine who is usually active, outgoing and sometimes thoughtless. Elsa Graham is a family story version of this quietly competent girl, promoted to a leading
role. Generally speaking, most heroines of family stories during the bridging years resemble her. An exception is good-looking and romantic Poppy Treloar who has closer ties to the tomboy paradigm and this version of the pattern, the 'adventurer-rebel', is discussed further in Chapter Nine. However, despite these links to earlier family stories, the Poppy Treloar books, along with novels like Pioneer Shack and No Medals For Meg, do not exhibit the unifying features of the Turner era, particularly the sometimes crusading spirit of Ethel and Lilian Turner, and Louise Mack, when examining the options for girls and women. This is not to say that during these years Australian girls were no longer constrained, rather that for some reason a preoccupation with this issue was not such a prominent feature of girls' fiction. What takes the place of the heroine's battles, battles which were the spice of the earlier novels, is apparent in these three novels from the forties: a somewhat boring catalogue of day to day activities as in No Medals for Meg; exotic adventures in Poppy Treloar; or the sort of inspirational striving after a (not quite impossible) goal as in Pioneer Shack. With Norah Linton who was adventurous without being a rebel, Mary Grant Bruce had established a variation on the usual pattern of family stories that worked admirably for a country setting. It was, however, a pattern that could only work within strictly defined limits. For stories about city girls
with a full family complement, the absence of a rebel character weakened the entire structure of the family story whose stimulus was the constraints domestic life placed on girls and women.

One reason for the enervation of girls' fiction during the bridging years is suggested by Drusilla Modjeska's study of Australian women writers in the two decades 1925 to 1945. During these years Australian women writers achieved a new prominence.

Almost half the novels written between 1928 and 1939 were by women. Quantity, however, is only a partial measure. Far more significant is the qualitative pre-eminence of women novelists. This was the heyday of Miles Franklin, Katherine Prichard, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw, Christina Stead and Eleanor Dark. Henry Handel Richardson was in her prime. Kylie Tennant and Dymphna Cusack's careers were beginning.12

These writers wrote for adults, but as has been suggested earlier, there is a choice to be made by women who want to write between writing for children or adults, a choice that is linked to a perception of writing children's books as an extension of a mothering role. This choice exists because of the special difficulties women writers have in being regarded as 'serious' writers and attracting the benefits and support this recognition brings. In Australia in the 1930's a network of support was established, chiefly
through the efforts of Nettie Palmer.

Although not a novelist herself, she was of central importance to the cultural history of the period as a critic, sponsor and correspondent of many writers...it was largely through her efforts that an impressive network developed which was committed to a concept of progressive and nationalist cultural evolution.13

Although impossible to verify, it is reasonable to assume that the prominence of women writers in the 1930's meant that quality writers chose to write for adults, and the 'lesser' option of children's writing was seldom taken up. Marjorie Barnard's first published book *The Ivory Gate* was intended for children.14 Dymphna Cusack and Kylie Tennant both wrote some books for children, and Tennant won the 1960 Book of the Year Award with *All the Proud Tribesmen*. However, whilst Tennant gained some fame for her children's books and wrote regularly for the *NSW School Magazine*, she is seldom regarded as a children's writer: rightly or wrongly, *Tiburon* is more highly thought of than *All the Proud Tribesmen*. Invariably, children's writers are asked when they intend to write a 'proper' book. Ethel Turner constantly derided her own work, convinced that if she were a better writer, she could write adult novels. Without reassurance as to the worth of their work, the Turner sisters, Mack and Bruce did not develop, or significantly alter, their themes, plots or style of writing. Patricia Wrightson has commented in regard to Ethel Turner's
If Turner fretted about doing it [writing for children] then she obviously wasn't going to improve; she wasn't being sincere to her own work, however sincere she might be in other ways.15

This is not to say that quality writers did not want to write for children, or did not enjoy writing for children, but that prior to the 1950's in Australia, children's authors received very little acknowledgement of their skill and artistry, and scant encouragement to experiment or broaden their themes or technique. It is really only now, in the 1980's, that anyone seriously suggests that Australian children's literature can match literature for adults, or, as suggested by the more audacious children's literature critics and writers, surpass Australian writing for adults. Nettie Palmer's very favourable comments in 1924 about the books of Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce as compared to contemporary adult books, were not often heard. Undoubtedly many people privately held similar views, but none found their way into print.16

When quality writers, mainly women, were again prompted to write for children in the 1950's, this was not the result of some failure of the impetus which led women to write adult novels in the 1930's and 1940's, but rather was due to a change in the status of Australian children's literature, augmented by a concern to write realistic Australian stories for children.
It is ironic that whilst Australian children's fiction during the bridging years was undistinguished, interest in children's literature was growing. The changing status of children's literature in Australia was closely allied to the formation of the New South Wales Children's Book Council in 1945 and the Children's Library Movement which had its beginnings in the 1920's. The activities of these two organisations have not been sufficiently documented or assessed. Although beyond the scope of this study, such an assessment of the backgrounds of these movements, as well as their links to similar groups in Britain and the United States, would contribute much to an understanding of trends in children's fiction. Several people involved in the formation of the NSW Book Council; Maurice Saxby, Eve Pownall and Mary Townes Nyland, have recorded their recollections of its beginnings, and these first-hand accounts evoke the enthusiasm and energy of the people involved in these early years.17 The initial stimulus in 1945 appears to have been the decision of the Children's Book Council in the United States to sponsor an International Children's Book Week. Its theme was "United Through Books", an optimistic reflection of the hope for world peace engendered by the newly formed United Nations. The U.S. Information Library in Sydney, together with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, brought together the few people who were at
this time involved in children's literature, prominent among them the organizers of the Children's Library Movement, in particular its founder Mary Matheson. Both Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce were involved to some degree with this movement through the few libraries that pioneered a children's service. Ethel Turner lived quite near the Mosman Municipal Library where Bessie Thomas had "emphasized the children's service with great success". In an undated speech intended for Children's Book Week (perhaps the first one in 1945?) Turner praised the establishment of children's libraries.

Two children's libraries, [Mosman and Sydney Municipal] the advance guard of more to come...they are the gallant, farseeing and purely voluntary efforts of Miss Bessie Thomas, Mrs Allworth and Miss Rivett.

In 1939, Mary Grant Bruce was a special guest at the Prahran Public Library in Victoria which had a successful children's service, lending over twenty-four thousand books during that year.

The foundation of interest in children's libraries and books established by this Australian movement, together with the promptings of initiatives in the United States, "fired" the "enthusiasm" of a substantial group of (mainly) Sydney-based people. As Eve Pownall has noted, even although the first Children's Book Week in 1945 attracted very little
media interest,

Time and circumstances...favoured the growth of the movement. Public libraries and libraries in schools were poised to increase greatly in number and importance; they could help and in turn be helped by Book Week's aim of extending interest in bringing more or better books to children.22

The Australian Book Society agreed to sponsor a Book of the Year Award for 1946, but the decline of Australian children's literature over the previous two decades set something of a problem.

The abysmal state of publishing of children's books in Australia at the time would have daunted the faint-hearted, but crusaders are made of stronger stuff. True to its promise, the Australian Book Society convened a panel of judges comprising one children's librarian in each capital city (there weren't many to choose from then), and in due course handed to the Committee for International Children's Book Week the Australian book nominated as most worthy to be called Book of the Year for 1946. It was Karrawingi the Emu by Leslie Rees, illustrated by Walter Cunningham and published by John Sands.23

It was a curious situation - a group of enthusiasts, keen to promote Australian children's books, but with very little product to support. For authors wanting to write for and about Australian children, the conditions could not have been more propitious. It was these circumstances that underpinned the new prominence of the family story in the 1950's. New writers (mainly women) saw the demand for Australian stories and naturally turned to an aspect of Australian life they knew intimately - girlhood. It was a lack of books with an Australian
setting that prompted Spence to write children's novels;

...I obtained the post of Children's Librarian in a nearby industrial city of Coventry, a most interesting job which entailed the selection of book stock for the nine junior libraries of the city. Thus I became acquainted with the work of the various children's authors, publishers and illustrators and came to notice the keen demand for stories about Australia...a demand which was often difficult to meet. It was then that I began to contemplate writing children's books with Australian backgrounds...As a librarian I had encountered so many wildly improbable adventure stories that I decided to try and write an Australian tale of adventure that could have happened. 24

Spence's desire to write believable Australian stories seems to have been a prime motivation for other writers:

My own love of country, always lusty - grew even stronger as I realized more deeply all that had gone into her shaping. The fact that we had a history to be told, apart from dates of landings and stories of exploration thrilled me...To foster that spirit, ['pride in our national character'] in any small way, is surely a worthwhile pursuit of any writer. (Mavis T. Clark)25

I only tried to write about my own district, without making too much of it, to make the characters real and to use for a plot things that might really happen to almost anyone. (Patricia Wrightson)26

The sort of claims made for Turner by both early and present critics that her work represented the first 'convincing' and 'realistic' picture of Australian life in children's books were repeated in regard to writers such as Nan Chauncy, Patricia Wrightson, Joan Phipson, and Eleanor Spence. These four were the most
successful children's writers of the 1950's. Phipson and Wrightson were published by Angus and Robertson, and Chauncy and Spence by Oxford University Press. As with Ward, Lock in the 1890's, it was Oxford, an English publisher with an Australian office and a wide-ranging distribution network that stimulated the Australian children's book trade, together with the renewed interest of the Australian publisher, Angus and Robertson (undoubtedly prompted by the activities of the Children's Book Council) in their children's list. Frank Eyre, formerly Oxford's children's books editor, was sent to Australia in 1950 as joint manager of the Australian Branch.

The reputation Eyre had established in England and a small book he had written on children's books for the British Council which was published soon after his arrival in Australia, inevitably attracted to the Branch everyone interested in children's books. It was impossible for all this to be ignored and it was soon seen that, although the Australian publishing of children's books was still frowned on, it made good sense for the Branch to act as a kind of remote sponsoring editor for the home department. It has done that ever since, and in the process found and fostered a group of Australian writers for children: Nan Chauncy, Eleanor Spence, Pixie Brinsmead [Hesba Brinsmead], Margaret Balderson and others, who became the foundation of Oxford's strong list of Australian children's books.27

A connection between the two publishing houses was the artist Margaret Horder, whose illustrations for Chauncy's and Phipson's books gave a very distinctive flavour to the earlier books of these authors. To many people today, particularly those who were children in
the 1950's and 1960's, Horder's illustrations prompt memories of childhood reading. These memories are probably reinforced for those who lived in New South Wales because Horder's work was often published in the New South Wales School Magazine, a journal whose role in the 1950's revival of Australian children's fiction has not been adequately assessed. First established in 1916, this journal (which was distributed to every primary school child in New South Wales) had maintained a very consistent format and outlook until the 1950's when changes were made - either in reaction to the 'renaissance' of children's literature or as part of a general alteration in regard to the nature and purpose of fiction for children - that gained for the Magazine an important role as a promoter of new talent in Australian children's literature.

Some research has been undertaken in regard to the magazine's formation as a reflection of educational policy, but its literary function over sixty-nine years has attracted little comment in histories or criticism. Geoffrey Dutton's recently published Snow on the Saltbush (1984) devotes a chapter to school readers, mentioning every state's school magazine, including Outpost the correspondence school journal, but does not mention the NSW School Magazine at all! A literary magazine for children is something of a rarity and certainly this particular journal, read by so many
children, has maintained a special place in the Australian children's literary scene.

The decision of the Department of Education in 1916 to introduce the Magazine could be viewed charitably as a commitment to provide school children with much needed reading material, or more realistically, as an attempt to exercise control over reading matter in schools. Certainly the earlier issues of the journal showed a strong tendency towards establishing specific attitudes in the readers, particularly towards Australia's involvement in the World War. The poem "Our Flag" included in the first number of Part II, 1918 indicates the major emphasis of the Magazine during, and for some years after the war.

Before the Empire's flag I stand,  
And pledge myself should duty call  
To guard my own fair native land,  
And for its colours stand or fall;  
Defend my King at his command,  
And honour God, who rules o'er all.

The first editor, Stephen Henry Smith had edited commercially produced school papers earlier in the century (the Children's Newspaper, The Australian School Paper and The Commonwealth School Paper) as well as publishing several school texts ranging from senior English history to "Careers for Boys". S.G. Firth's description of the content and outlook of the Commonwealth School Paper can be readily applied to
early issues of the Magazine.

Its world was one of certainty about the British Empire, British military might, pride of race, honour, duty, self-sacrifice, the Victorian Cross, God, General Gordon, hard work, the flag, wattle, the poor savages, Shakespeare, noble deeds, adventure, exploration, heroes and, in the end, World War I.29

It was many years before the Magazine exhibited any reduction in this legacy of Smith's (and the Department's) valuation of literature as a means to push 'respectable' ideas and values. This commitment overrode any intention the Magazine might also have had to providing literature for its own sake, as entertainment or as an example of excellence. This meant, as it did in the earlier Commonwealth School Paper, that much Australian literature was excluded because it was not 'safe'.

Children could quite safely be taught to be proud of Australian history, but Australian literature was different. Much of the most popular poetry, for example, expressed entirely the wrong sentiments and ideals. Careful choices had to be made.30

Almost all the Australian poetry in early editions of the Magazine, when not praising the empire, dealt with 'neutral' topics like nature - wattles, koalas and bush mornings.

In spite of this tendency to favour non-literary concerns, The School Magazine of Literature for Our Boys and Girls, to give the journal its full title, was designed from the start to meet the needs of various
reading levels. Initially there were three parts, Part I for class III, Part 2 for classes IV and V and Part 3 for class VI issued in ten numbers over the school year. In 1935 an additional part meant each class had their own Magazine. Apart from this change, the content of the Magazine had altered to include more literary material, mostly adult literature somewhat adapted. As well, gradually, the Magazine became less obviously didactic. In 1938, a particularly patriotic year due to the sesquicentennial, Australian children's literature was well represented along with adult literature such as a Henry Lawson story and one of the magazine's favourite poems (judging by the number of times it was re-printed), Evans' The Women of the West. Oddly, most of the children's literature (extracts and contributions from Dot and the Kangaroo, Norah of Billabong, Mrs Aeneas Gunn, Kate Langloh Parker and May Gibbs) had been written some years before, indicating the Magazine's tendency to adapt and extract rather than accept outside manuscripts, as well as the poor condition of Australian children's literature at this time. The second editor, Doris Chadwick, was with the Magazine from 1924 to 1960.31 During these years the content of the Magazine changed, very gradually, to become more of a literary magazine. In the 1940's some book extracts were concluded with the line "This book should be in every school library". This short injunction was the forerunner of significant
alterations in the Magazine that underpinned its important role in the re-surgence of interest in Australian children's literature in the 1950's and 1960's.

In 1949 Noreen Shelley was employed as assistant editor after Doris Chadwick had edited the Magazine, single-handed, for twenty-five years. In 1952, Part 3 featured a series of articles "About Books" by Noreen Shelley. Out of nine books reviewed (along with an extract from each) there were three Australian books, The Magic Pudding, Dale Collins' Bush Holiday and Kylie Tennant's John o' the Forest (a collection of plays). The following year, 1953 Part 4 featured another book review with extract section, "Something to Read" also by Noreen Shelley. As well, for the first time, Book Week was promoted (Pt 4, 1953, p176). In an enthusiastic review of Joan Phipson's Good Luck to the Rider Shelley makes it clear that its 'Australianness' is important.

Here we have a story that is warmly human; the story of a family, in a setting that is convincingly real, and unmistakably Australian. (Pt4, 1953, p265)

This comment summarises the major features of the children's books that were to have so much success in the 1950's. The newly emerging bias of the Magazine coincided with the taste of the public (or more significantly, the tastes of the Book Council and other
adult readers of children's fiction) for realistic family stories.

The book review section in the Magazine, under various titles, (in 1956, "Books to Read", 1959 "Explore with Books" and "Books to Enjoy") publicised the novels of the fifties group of writers to almost every child in New South Wales. The role of these reviews of contemporary Australian children's books cannot be underestimated because although most of the books reviewed had already found favour with critics (most having either won the Book of the Year Award or were by authors who had previously gained this Award) they were firmly directed at the child reader rather than at teachers, parents or librarians. Noreen Shelley was to become a successful author herself, but her role in reinforcing the position of early winners of the Book of the Year Award was central to their establishment as the 'premier' Australian children's authors. Patricia Wrightson in pointing out that The Crooked Snake was not serialised in the Magazine until after it had won Book of the Year confirms the reinforcing role that Shelley carried out.

I remember that Noreen Shelley wrote to me appreciatively about my second book, and that this coming from such a source, was a great encouragement. She was then assistant editor.32

It cannot be claimed that the School Magazine originated the upsurge of interest in Australian
children's literature, rather its role was in promoting a core of writers who then went on from their early successes in the fifties to a firm commitment to children's writing, and in maintaining the momentum of the renewed interest in Australian children's books through to the present day. As two former editors of the Magazine, Lilith Norman and Patricia Wrightson, note,

There are several among the 'coming' writers rather than the established who cut their literary teeth on short stories for S.M.33

...more recent writers - Nan Hunt (N.L. Ray), Robin Klein, and the New Zealander Margaret Mahy - were contributors to School Magazine, the former two long before they were published in book form. Indeed, Nan Hunt frequently says she owes her success to the magazine and to the editorial advice and assistance she got there.34

The New South Wales School Magazine was well-placed to play an important role in the 1950's revival as most of the major writers came from New South Wales and the Children's Book Council had originated in that state. The critics and scholars were marshalled by the Book Council, publishers looked to the Book of the Year Awards, children's libraries and bookshops provided the means of getting the books to readers, but the School Magazine provided jobs, editorial advice, was a rare market for short story writing for children,35 was a place to start for beginner writers, and an unmatched source of promotion for more or less established
writers. The prominence of this strong and enduring core of Australian children's writers contrasts with the situation of children's writers during the thirties and forties. Of course, this new found structure of support and criticism had at its centre the talent of the new group of authors, Nan Chauncy, Joan Phipson, Patricia Wrightson and Eleanor Spence, and those that followed soon after them, but it has to be noted that these authors' first books were not startlingly different from the children's novels of the thirties and forties. The 'old pots' provided both a starting place and a point of departure. In the fifties family stories were still categorised as books for girls and, with the the exception of Patricia Wrightson's *The Crooked Snake* emphasised the role of the heroine. The 'modern' period in Australian children's writing does not really begin until the sixties when the writers of the fifties, supported by the positive acknowledgement of their work by awards and criticism, begin to expand their themes and experiment within the genre.
It was a very short note that Sylvie composed for her mother. But it took some thinking out. It said: 'Do not worry about us. We are not running away. Just going to get advice about our future.' Mavis Thorpe Clark, The Min-Min (1966)
Many of the new children's novels of the 1950's that were so eagerly promoted by the Book Council and interested individuals, were in some ways different from the Australian children's literature that had gone before. For family stories in particular, one of the most distinctive features of a number of the novels was a new type of heroine who appeared to bear very little resemblance to the literary paradigm of the rebel tomboy. The beginnings of a change in the nature of the heroine had been apparent in family stories of the 1930's and 1940's. Three major writers of the revival, Joan Phipson, Eleanor Spence and Mavis T. Clark, published books in the 1950's and 1960's that featured heroines who are timid and unassertive but who overcome their 'deficiencies' and achieve success.

The first Australian family story with this type of heroine was Joan Phipson's *Good Luck to the Rider* (1953). This book marks a point where the depiction of the heroine diverges quite radically from that in the Turner era, significantly altering the pattern of compromise that had distinguished earlier fiction written for girls. Writers of family stories did not immediately take-up this new type of heroine to the exclusion of earlier paradigms, rather the tomboy heroine still appeared - although more often in novels
with an historical setting - and the unassertive girl in novels with a contemporary setting.

In her address to a conference in 1980 titled "The Atypical Child: A Writer's View", Eleanor Spence, working from the premise that "there is nothing new under the sun", sought the literary archetypes for atypical children. Although Spence was leading on to a discussion of The October Child (1976), her award winning novel about a family whose youngest child is autistic, she does initially take the wider definition of 'atypical' as 'not conforming to type':

I had rather a search before I could find archetypes for children in need of special care, or the handicapped generally. Mythical children are often exceptional, (Hercules is an outstanding example!) but in a way that suggests a different kind of handicap altogether. They are of the type of the child King Arthur, who accomplished the impossible task despaired of by adults, and are handicapped by overwhelming odds against them, rather than by deficiencies in themselves. Indeed, they eventually become Heroes, despite the odds; their symbolic connections with Christianity - and other religions - are obvious. 3

Almost every heroine of a girls' book fits this definition of atypical as 'not conforming to type'. Spence's perception of the differences between a child who is handicapped by deficiencies in others, rather than deficiencies in themselves, describes very accurately the major point of difference between the two historical periods in this study. The Turner era
is characterised by its clever and outgoing heroines; Judy Woolcot, Betty Bruce, Lennie Leighton, Nicola Silver, and Norah Linton; who clash with those who, it is suggested in the novels, are too narrow, negative or uncaring to appreciate their worth.

'Be careful of Judy' had been almost the last words of the anxious mother when, in the light that comes when the world's is going out, she had seen with terrible clearness the stones and briars in the way of that particular pair of small, eager feet.
And she had died, and Judy was stumbling right amongst them now, and her father could not 'be careful' of her because he absolutely did not know how.

In contrast, heroines like Barbara in Good Luck to the Rider, are worried by what they feel are inadequacies in their own personalities.

Barbara Trevor is the youngest in a family of four children, the other three; Sheila, and the twins George and Clive, being competent, successful and assured.
She is particularly envious of her elder sister Sheila.

Her [Barbara's] pale hair hung in dank strands round her face, her arms and legs looked thinner than ever in her brief, dripping bathing-suit, and she shivered a little. 'Sheila's so clever, isn't she, George?' she said. 'And pretty—oh yes, she is pretty,' she insisted as George looked at her in surprise. 'I wish I could be like Sheila. Nothing ever worries her.'
'You're an idiot-child,' said George... 'What on earth would we do with two bright young social successes about the place...?' (Good Luck to the Rider, p12)

However, it is obvious from a small number of victories that Barbara has the author's support. Early in the novel, after Clive ridicules Barbara's fishing gear she
catches,

...a fair-sized trout that, with care, would feed them all for supper. She unhooked it gingerly and carried it back to camp. Considering all things, she decided she would ask Clive to clean it. (Good Luck to the Rider, p14)

Those that sympathise with Barbara and best understand her fears and needs are Mrs Trevor and George (who "was like his mother").

She had always hated thunder, and he could feel her quivering under the blankets. He patted her shoulder. No one but George had ever guessed the battles she had with herself during a storm. (Good Luck to the Rider, p16)

It is George and Mrs Trevor who support Barbara when she wants to keep a brumby foal found orphaned in the bush, and later it is Mrs Trevor who sees the significance of the relationship between horse and girl. When Rosinate jumps a rail fence to escape a wild boar Mrs Trevor comments,

'It must have given you a horrid fright, dearie, but it was worth it.'
Barbara said nothing, but returned her mother's smile, and their eyes met in understanding. (Good Luck to the Rider, p116)

Skinny, timid and undecided, Barbara and the brumby foal she adopts have much in common. Barbara wants the colt because it is so unlike her jaunty show pony Ting-a-ling, "a bouncing, bossy pony" of whom she is quite frightened. The colt's odd markings and "clown-like appearance" make it all the more attractive to her. It is through fighting the colt's battles that Barbara gains in confidence. In a plot that relies
heavily on a National Velvet motif, the aptly named Rosinate is found to be a natural jumper and Barbara's belief in the horse is justified when he wins the blue ribbon for jumping at the local show!

Her face was drawn and pale, but her eyes blazed, and for all its tiredness there was a vitality there that Mrs Trevor had never seen before. Barbara went up to her mother and stopped. 'Rozz did it,' she said simply. (Good Luck to the Rider, p147)

Many girls' books are about relationships between girls and horses. Pony stories as a genre form a large proportion of formula stories for girls, taking their pattern from the bare plot of National Velvet, without its contradictions and complexities. As well, the young horse is often used as a metaphor for the rebel heroine, implying a comparison between the breaking of the horse and the restrictions of the girls' future. Jo March is referred to as coltish, Judy Woolcot is attracted to a nervous and skittish horse. The chapter "The Horse-breaker" in Good Luck to the Rider would have unfortunate overtones in a girls' story with a 'tomboy' theme. However, in the context of Good Luck to the Rider, the significance of the breaking-in of Rosinate is only to confirm Barbara's optimism and belief in the usefulness and talent of her horse. Growing older for Barbara is not linked to the restrictions of becoming a young lady, rather the future represents opportunities for personal
gains and triumphs.

...Mr Trevor said, 'I never thought I should live to see the day when Barbara would take to jumping.'
'She's growing up,' said Mrs Trevor. (Good Luck to the Rider, p117)

The naming of the colt Rosinate after Don Quixote's horse has an obvious significance for the horse and the girl who, in revealing hidden qualities, turn from ugly ducklings to swans. Karen, heroine of Eleanor Spence's first published novel Patterson's Track (1958), undergoes a similar transformation. Spence was the next important writer of family stories in the 1950's to feature a timid heroine. Unlike Phipson, who changed to major boy characters quite early in her career, Spence wrote family stories with a central girl character until 1972, and of the two authors appears to have been most influenced by past Australian and overseas girls' fiction.

Karen, like Barbara, feels herself to be at a disadvantage in relation to her confident and clever brothers.

It was continually being said of Karen that she went through life in a dream. Her parents, brothers, teachers, and school-fellows all made the statement at frequent intervals, and Karen, feeling guilty but puzzled, supposed that this must be true. She was puzzled because she could never see how to stop dreaming: she just couldn't help it. It made her forgetful and careless, and apt to neglect various duties. She could see that people who did not dream so much got on in life a great deal better. Barry, for instance, was
completely wide-awake at all times, and he was a very successful sort of person. He could swim and run and play cricket and football, and had dozens of friends of both sexes. And Geoffrey was always alert, and everyone said he was a very clever boy with a great future. Karen knew herself to be, by comparison with her brothers, a dull, plain, and timid creature. (Patterson's Track, p13)

The touch of humour evident in the statement that Barry "was completely wide-awake at all times" foreshadows just who might be found lacking later on in the story. Karen, for the first time in her life, proposes a holiday excursion that is received enthusiastically by her brothers. Intrigued by her grandfather's story of a convict, Simon Patterson, who over one hundred and forty years before had fled from the scene of his master's murder, she suggests they visit Hillmorton, where it happened. Her brothers take over the plan, turning it from Karen's interest in a possible miscarriage of justice to an opportunity for adventure.

'We'll be just like real explorers,' said Geoffrey enthusiastically. 'Barry, let's start making a list of all the things we need.'
'And don't forget, you boys,' added Mr Pearson, 'this is really Karen's expedition.'
'Karen's?' repeated Barry. 'Oh, I see. But she hasn't done as much hiking as we have.'
Karen was too happy to feel snubbed. She was about to see her dream come true, and that was all that mattered. (Patterson's Track, p35)

Barry, "lordly and condescending" grudgingly allows Marcie, Barbara's outgoing and confident friend, to come on the hike because she can cook. At the first opportunity, Marcie dares Karen to sneak away from the camp and visit a fun-fair across the river. This first
exercise in rebellion, together with further support from Marcie, and the pleasure of pursuing and proving her theories about Patterson's innocence, brings about a change in Karen and re-organises the allegiances between herself and her two brothers. Barry's arrogance and anger at having Bluey, Marcie's brother, placed in charge of the hike by his grandfather leads to a series of near disasters that make Karen aware of his short-comings.

'You listen to me,' said Karen, in a voice that shook with anger. 'I've always done just what you said. I've never even answered back when you laughed at me for not being able to swim or fish or run, or when you made fun of me about my hair or clothes or something. But I thought up this trip, and you're not going to spoil it. You want to give up just because you can't have your own way. This time I'm not going to follow you, and I don't think I will ever again!' (Patterson's Track, p120)

At the same time Karen and Geoffrey find a new respect and understanding of each other.

Karen knew...that in the last ten minutes she and her younger brother had come closer together than ever before. It was a good feeling. It was strange, she reflected, how many unexpected discoveries she had made on this expedition-about people, including herself, rather than things. Perhaps that was the beginning of growing up. (Patterson's Track, p110)

Neither Spence nor Phipson are at all reticent or subtle in respect to their theme.

The timid Karen who was afraid of so much had been left behind at Booralee, and in her place went an eager girl with a budding confidence in her own judgement, and a determination to prove herself to others. (Patterson's Track, p137)
In these authors' advocation of independence and confidence for their heroines there is no suggestion that what the girls seek is unnatural, nor does the change conflict with the desires of those around them. Barry gained a small amount of pleasure from bullying his younger sister but was keener to have her be like other girls - 'other girls' being pictured as self-assured and competent. The tensions that were part of the earlier 'tomboy' novels are not apparent. There is no element of subversion in the modern novels as there had been in earlier family stories where a seeming endorsement of the domestic ideal masked discontent and anger with the limited opportunities for girls and women. Early heroines are strong but are encouraged by others to appear weak - the modern heroines appear weak but prove themselves to be, in truth, strong and courageous. In both cases there is authorial support for the characteristic of strength in the heroines but in early novels this is "submerged, subterranean, devious"7 in the modern novels it is straight-forward, making this contemporary girls' fiction seemingly less complex. A complicated 'language' is made simple, making less demands on the reader as (conscious or unconscious) interpreter.

The changes in the nature of the heroine suggest modern authors of girls' fiction perceived significant changes in the opportunities and
expectations of Australian girls. The fact that Phipson and Spence choose 'underdogs' as their heroines, girls whose 'salvation' comes about by helping animals and people even less thought of than themselves - an ugly brumby colt and a convict suspected of murder - suggests that the patterns and themes utilized by earlier writers are no longer appropriate within the present social context. Justified or not by the real life circumstances of Australian girls, authors of girls' stories took the stance that ambition and energy were no longer a problem for girls, but rather there were new hurdles for the less assured and sensitive girl. Marcie in Patterson's Track, and Barbara's outgoing and brave schoolfriend Will in Good Luck to the Rider, are the sort of girls who once would have been the central characters in a family story, annoying everyone about them with their cheeky vigour and high spirits. Their role in these contemporary novels is to help their more timid friends cope with a world that welcomes vigour and spirit in girls. In these novels, the heroine is still an outsider, but the reasons why this is so, re-cast the entire structure of the plot. Where tensions were generated in maintaining the rebel's integrity, creating contradictory and complex thematic patterns in the early girls' novels, the movement of these two 1950's books is a straight-forward progression towards an acceptable change in the heroine. However, what is
maintained from the 'rebel' novels is a preoccupation with the concept that being an outsider, for whatever reason, makes a valuable contribution to the heroine's understanding of herself and of other people. These novels that mark a major change in direction in Australian girls' literature, nevertheless maintain an antipathy towards those who hold conformist expectations about girls. What these expectations are, are voiced by the somewhat antagonistic characters in both these novels,

'We don't want another girl,' said Barry. 'One's quite enough. Girls talk too much, and want to have rests all the time.' (Patterson's Track, p38)

Sheila had left school at the end of the year and was hoping to take a veterinary course at the university. Mr. Trevor was doubtful whether it would be a suitable career and also, whether the course would not prove to be too difficult for her. (Good Luck to the Rider, p58) [Sheila does pass]

This view of changing directions in girls' literature of the 1950's is supported by Spence's second novel, The Summer in Between(1959) which, although about an apparently 'successful' girl, nevertheless maintains the same thematic structure of Patterson's Track.8 The heroine, twelve-year-old Faith Melville is, in contrast to Karen of Patterson's Track, bossy, clever, pretty and full of self-confidence. Walking home from primary school for the last time with
her book prizes (Little Women, Wuthering Heights, and a book of poetry) Faith is set to enjoy her summer holidays. Although a little annoyed by her brother Jamey's friendship with a 'rough' boy and irritated that her best friend has moved from the district, Faith is comfortable in the belief that things will always go her way. This all changes when Pauline comes to stay next door. Pauline, a city girl, has a fund of self-confidence that even Faith cannot match. Faith is angry and hurt when, after writing a play (allotting herself the plum role), Pauline as director gives the best part to Faith's enemy Colleen Bailey. Toppled from her place as leader, Faith learns a number of lessons, chiefly to think about other people a little more, and not judge them by comparison to herself and her own views and habits. This type of lesson seems somewhat reminiscent of the changes expected from the 'unladylike' heroines of earlier books. However, in the same way as the horse-breaking incident in Phipson's Good Luck to the Rider served as a positive indication of Barbara's growth to maturity, Faith's lesson is not constricting, but rather a means by which her future opportunities are enhanced. What this future might be is suggested by the portrait of Aunt Elizabeth, a person Faith admires and seems destined to emulate.

She was Mrs Melville's youngest sister, an energetic, lively person, assistant editor of a woman's magazine. She lived alone in a shabby,
untidy flat ten minutes from the centre of the city; in her spare time she wrote stories and articles, and even a few poems, which Faith could not begin to understand. (The Summer in Between, p133)

Faith is Spence's only major contemporary 'writer' heroine and this might be some indication of expanding opportunities in education and careers for girls, as well as implying more distance between the author and her heroines. The children in The Green Laurel (1963) and The Year of the Currawong (1965) are remarkably steadfast in regard to their childhood ambitions.9 Three of the four children in The Year of the Currawong have very specific goals; twelve-year-old Alex is devoted to historical research, eleven-year-old Terry to writing and eight-year-old Chess to mineralology! Only the eldest child, Elizabeth has no single aim in life and she is worried about this. When the Kendalls move from the city to Currawong Crossing, she 'discovers' potting and joins the galaxy of strongly certain children who all appear to have their futures mapped out. This comes as a great relief to her parents who,

were accustomed to seeing their older daughter take up a subject and drop it just as speedily...the Professor and Janet watched with covert delight as Elizabeth's fair head was bent over her book, evening after tranquil evening. (The Year of the Currawong, p71)

Similarly Lesley Somerville in The Green Laurel is provoked by her dislike of the family's gypsy-like
lifestyle to be interested in building and houses and wants to be an architect. The main theme of this delicate and beautifully written moral tale is what it takes to make a home. Lesley at first thinks it means staying in one place, "Oh may she live like some green laurel, Rooted in one dear perpetual place". However, after a year of physical and emotional growth she decides,

'It's not enough to have the house-with-roots...Everyone in it has to have roots too. And I suppose some of them don't grow very well.' (The Green Laurel, p145)

'With all of us together, a home can be any sort of place can't it? I do believe I'm only just beginning to understand a whole lot of things.' 'Naturally,' said John. [Mr Somerville] 'You're growing up.' (The Green Laurel, p181)

Again Lesley's lessons expand her horizons, and the suggestion is that as she grows she will learn more and more. Somewhat withdrawn and sensitive, Lesley is contrasted with her younger sister Rae, a tomboy ("We did the right thing, giving you a boy's name") who is always happy, comfortable with other people, ambitious, and a little egocentric. Like Will in Good Luck to the Rider, and Marcie of Patterson's Track, Rae's outgoing and slapdash (Mrs Somerville's description) approach to life is shown to be acceptable, indeed valuable, in girls. One must have a purpose, however, and it is implied that Lesley's friend Meredith, who has strong passions for things that last a week and dramatically
change, is to be pitied for her lack of single-mindedness!

The plot of a timid or uncertain girl either getting some opportunity to prove her 'metal', or actively seeking some way to understand and improve herself, became the dominant pattern of girls' fiction during the latter years of the 1950's and of the 1960's. The variations on this theme were almost as numerous as the earlier permutations of the rebel heroine. In 1976, a critic described Patterson's Track as a cliche, inadvertently revealing just how prevalent this pattern, of a weak heroine making good, had since become. One author who later took up this pattern was Mavis Thorpe Clark, who had been writing children's fiction for some years longer than either Phipson or Spence. The majority of Clark's earlier books were family adventure stories, and one novel, The Brown Land Was Green (1956) was a family story set in the 1840's with a rebel heroine. In her novel The Min Min published in 1966, Clark looks at the problems of an older girl, Sylvie, whose situation combines both the pattern of an unassertive girl as established by Phipson and Spence, and the sort of family troubles that plagued characters like Lilian Turner's Betty Bruce and the older Lennie Leighton in Girls Together.
Sylvie Edwards seems to have the weight of the world on her shoulders. Her father drinks heavily, is aggressive, and short-tempered. Mrs Edwards, haggard and aged beyond her years by the uncongenial surroundings of the family's home at a central Australian railway siding, is pregnant with her sixth child. The other children appear to be largely under Sylvie's care.

In due course, there would be another baby. That was why her mother tired quickly. There would be more work to do then, less room in the cottage, and the money for food would have to stretch to include the new-comer. Sylvie wasn't looking forward to the new baby. She hoped it wouldn't cry too much. It would be one more for her father to shout at when the mood took him. Babies, she thought, too, should be born into homes where there was always plenty of milk and butter to spread thickly. (The Min-Min, p2)

It is a frightening, uncertain and dead-end sort of world in the fettler's camp. Sylvie is an ordinary sort of girl, not especially intelligent or creative, but she knows life must have more to offer than the dust, ignorance, and violence she is part of. One night she sees a min-min in the desert, a dancing coloured light that the aboriginals say can never be reached which makes her "feel excited inside" and prompts her to consider leaving the camp. She does leave soon after with her younger brother, Reg, who is in trouble with the police, and together they set out into the desert to seek "advice about the future" from a woman, Mrs Tucker, Sylvie has met briefly before at a race meeting.
Sylvie is some years older than Phipson's and Spence's heroines, and although her age is never stated, the advice she seeks, at least as understood by Mrs Tucker, is how to make the transition from girl to woman.

She [Mrs Tucker] saw that Sylvie was struggling with a girl's thoughts - thoughts that had been sharpened or clouded, as the case might be, with the knowledge that came unasked in that close living of the age groups in the fettler's camp. Sylvie knew all about life, without yet having lived it. Knew all about life without knowing herself. (The Min-Min, pp106-107)

Mrs Tucker with three sons and no daughter, forms a very close bond with Sylvie, 'arming' her, as it were, with the understanding of female kinship, to negotiate her way in a male world. Mary Tucker believes "it pays sometimes to pander to a man", and manipulates her men-folk so that life is ordered to her satisfaction. Sylvie feels she has achieved some distinction as an individual when first her teacher from the siding, Mr Scott, compliments her on her changed appearance, and when later, her father begs her to return to the family to care for the children.

'The kids are out waiting in the car. I wanted to ask you...before they came in. I wanted to know...if you were willing.' Suddenly, like a hammer, the thought struck her. He had sought her willingness to help keep the family together; whereas, being her father, he could have just commanded her. She held out her hand then, for just one brief moment. (The Min-Min, p199)
The elusive desert light the min-min, which beckons but can never be reached, would perhaps have been a more suitable image of the grand ambitions of earlier heroines like Judy Woolcot and Betty Bruce. Although Sylvie does tell her teacher Clive Scott that "Some night...I'm going to keep walking until I come to it", what she seeks, and eventually finds, is not as elusive and exotic as the min-min light. A neat house in Whyalla, an orderly family, the grudging respect of her chastened father, and the prospect of a job as a dressmaker, is not a particularly expansive future, although it is undoubtedly an advance on life at the siding. The advice that Sylvie seeks, and gains, from Mrs Tucker is reminiscent of Ethel Turner's panacea for the ills of society, "All the world ought to be respectably comfortable", and as in Turner's novels, the centre of comfort is always a competent woman. Mrs Tucker says she is entirely satisfied with her life, caring for her sons, her husband and her home, and it is suggested that Sylvie's mother would have been happy too, if her husband had been morally stronger. There is no criticism of Mrs Edwards, as there may have been in an earlier family story, indeed she never actually appears in the book, rather Mr Edwards is blamed entirely for his family's distress. As in family stories of the past, Sylvie's role as a 'mother-substitute' is portrayed as a powerful position, but unlike earlier heroines Sylvie has not
had to forego any of her own desires, rather knowing that her family needs her, she ensures that her wants are established first.

All of these heroines, Karen, Faith, Elizabeth, Lesley, Barbara and Sylvie are, for all their faults of timidity and uncertainty, nevertheless the most admirable characters in the novels. These books are clearly intended for girl readers. Spence is quite specific about this in a comment made in the 1960's, "Although I have sons I prefer to write for girls"15, whereas Phipson implies her first book was meant for girls.

Animals and children somehow go together, and when I wrote my first book, Good Luck to the Rider, I tried to pass on my delight in horses by describing what I thought would be the loveliest thing that could happen to a small girl with the same inclinations as my own.16

Barbara is the first fully developed example of the new type of heroine in Australian children's books. However, after Good Luck to the Rider, whose combination of family, school, and horse story almost overqualifies it as a girls' book, Phipson changed quite soon to an interest in major boy characters - as did Spence in 1972. The implications of this change are discussed in a later chapter.17 Prior to this change, there are a group of early Phipson novels which, like Spence's The Year of the Currawong, and many of Clark's family adventure novels, are about
mixed groups of children without any intentional bias towards a major male or female character. These novels, *Six and Silver* (1954), *The Family Conspiracy* (1962), *Threat to the Barkers* (1963) and *Birkin* (1965) are light-hearted and entertaining. A comment by Rosemary Dobson, although referring to all Phipson's novels, is particularly applicable to this group of family stories.

There is a refreshing astringency in her [Phipson's] humour. But above this she has a respect for the dignity and uniqueness of the individual, old or young, which is certainly never allied with excess emotion or feeling. Her stories show a very sensitive understanding of relationships. Exchanges between parents and children are tempered with an affectionate irony.

In *Birkin* where the inhabitants of almost an entire township, Coolabin, appear at some point in the story, Phipson manages to avoid excessive stereotyping, and this is true of the adults, as well as of the children. In a manner reminiscent of Ethel Turner, Phipson adds depth to her child characters by reference to the parents, their relationship with one another, and the child's position in the home. Francie Newman, the heroine of *Birkin*, is initially described by comparison with her friend Rosie and her angelic-looking smaller brother Kevin.

The girl called Francie stopped and turned, so that Rosie bumped into her. She was Rosie's age, but thinner, paler and, unlike Rosie, dressed
rather obviously in somebody else's out-grown clothes...[she had] insignificant eyes and pale lashes, even if they were set widely over a high and pronounced curve of cheekbone... (Birkin, p8)

Her situation in the family is outlined through a description of Mrs Newman:

In the Newman establishment it was a never-mentioned fact that Mrs Newman wore the trousers. She ran the cafe with the help of Fay, who had left school, and the spasmodic assistance of Frances, and was fairly strict with them both. She was strict with Mr Newman, too, and perhaps he was not too distressed at having to spend his days in the big lorry as a carrier... Mrs Newman was small, pale and business-like and the only real indulgence she allowed herself was the spoiling of Kevin. The sight of those big eyes, the curly hair and beguiling mouth could undermine her at once. But for all her strictness she was very much appreciated by her family, for she was as conscientious for their welfare as she was for the shop and provided them always with a secure and orderly refuge. (Birkin, p21)

Within this context, and continuing the theme of the insignificant child who makes good, the suggestion that Francie might be more than she seems, is established well before her 'showdown' scene.

Ordinarily Frances never attempted to cross swords with her mother; Mrs Newman was boss and they all knew it. But tonight Frances gave her mother look for look and simply said, 'Is Dad back yet? We're going to put Birkin [a bull] in the garage, and if the lorry's there he'll have to take it out.' There was stunned silence. Anyone perceptive enough at that moment would have seen that Mrs Newman and her daughter, standing face to face, were so alike that except for age they might have been the same person...

'The garage is empty,' said Mrs Newman. 'Your father won't be back tonight. He's gone to the markets.'

'Thanks,' said Frances, and walked out into the rain once more.

'Well!' said Mrs Willis. (Birkin, p95)
This sort of scene, where a situation prompts the heroine to draw on reserves that she, and everyone else, were unaware she had, is a repetition of the major themes of Patterson's Track, Good Luck to the Rider and The Min-Min. The two boys who help Francie care for the orphaned bull calf, Birkin, (named after the famous explorer 'Birkin Wills'!) suffer more as outsiders than does Francie. Angus is a red-headed Scot and the children find his accent and looks off-putting. Tony is a forerunner of the type of boy character who later dominates Phipson's novels; small, dark and inarticulate, he is overly sensitive about his malformed hip and keeps very much to himself. They, too, reveal unsuspected qualities of persistence and courage, and Tony's particular affinity with animals is discovered and rewarded by an offer to finance a veterinary course. Francie is rewarded by being told to go out and have fun and the promise of some rather vague advice in the future. In books about mixed groups of children, the girls inevitably suffer by comparison to the boys, in terms of the more limited achievements allowed to them.

Unlike Ethel Turner in Mother's Little Girl or Flower o' the Pine, Phipson's interest in rounding-out her adult characters does not lead to a dominance of their problems and activities over those of the child characters. In The Family Conspiracy however, the
awfulness of Mrs Barker's situation together with the implication of Mr Barker's incompetency is, at first, present in the foreground of the novel in spite of the attractiveness of the Nesbit-like adventures of the children. The Barker children, Lorna, Edward, Belinda and Robbie set out to raise money for their mother who needs an operation. Regardless of several harrowing and sometimes comic adventures, they finally get the money with some support from their elder brother, Jack. Walter McVitty makes the comment that The Family Conspiracy "is a sort of modern E. Nesbit-type story", obviously referring to the likeness of its plot to The Story of the Treasure Seekers (1899). Unlike the Nesbit books, however, the effect of the situation on the adults in the family is finely drawn. A comparison is made between the workload of Mr and Mrs Barker;

Only Mr and Mrs Barker noticed that sometimes their life was rather too full. For Mr Barker, though, the worst was over... Now he had Jack, his eldest son, who had recently left school, and he felt that at last he could see daylight ahead. But for Mrs Barker there was as yet no end in sight. With a family of six, the cooking, housework and washing alone could occupy all of every day, for she had no help and expected none. But until the children were old enough to go to boarding school she conducted their correspondence school as well... Her family adored her, relied on her, and worked her to the bone, and she was thankful that she did not have her work to do, as many women farther west had, in a summer temperature that would fry eggs on a concrete path. (The Family Conspiracy, p12)

When Mrs Barker collapses and is told she needs an operation, Mr Barker announces "in a lordly way", "You leave the money to me". The rest of the story really
is about how things cannot be left to him. His children are far more competent than he, regardless of their bunglings and mishaps.

He [Edward] wished he were bigger and could help Jack, and did not think it odd that he should pick on Jack rather than his father. (The Family Conspiracy, p115)

Mr Barker always acts in a dramatic and petulant manner at the smallest sign of trouble, unlike his children who are either very reserved (Jack, Lorna, Edward and Fanny) or given to violent outbursts (Belinda and Robbie). Mrs Barker silently suffers through it all, a little too silently to be credible.

'Why', he boomed down the supper table to his wife, 'when we are all straining every muscle to raise the wind to have you sent away and fixed up, must we be constantly having these infuriating additional expenses?'

Mrs Barker said nothing, and was not expected to. It did not occur to her to take offence at being referred to as if she were a broken alarm clock. (The Family Conspiracy, p83)

Eleanor Spence in her earlier novels does not give this sort of prominence to her adult characters, although her close analysis of character, and lack of plot, ("you can hear them creaking", she has commented21) leaves room for this sort of expansion. In The Min-Min Clark's major adult characters are drawn as finely as those of the children. These characters, as well as Phipson's deftly drawn adult characters, and even the sketchy glimpses of the somewhat 'off-stage' adults in Spence's books, provide a context for
the heroines in the authors' novels. The forward-looking nature of the theme of sensitive girls who gain confidence through experience implies that as adults they will achieve success. This 'success' is not specific in Phipson's novels, whereas Spence's extraordinarily talented children have an ambition they expect to fulfil. This characteristic of Spence's heroines is undoubtedly influenced by the ambitious goals of heroines from the earlier girls' books she herself enjoyed reading as a child, such as Anne of Green Gables, Little Women and some of Ethel Turner's novels. Unlike these books, however, the goals of Spence's heroines seem possible because of the occupations of some of her adult women characters. In The Green Laurel and The Summer in Between there are brief sketches of independent women who live alone and are successful in their careers, and of married women who combine home life with some additional pursuit, generally creative. In keeping with the general aura of talent in the Kendall family, in The Year of the Currawong, Mrs Kendall is a part-time, although quite successful painter. These characters are not vital to the plot, but rather their inclusion suggests possibilities for the young heroines. By way of contrast this is not generally so in Phipson's novels, despite the relative prominence of her adult characters.
Some indication of the possible futures for Phipson's heroines, is the link she makes between them and their mothers. Unlike Spence, who usually portrays favourable daughter-father relationships; Phipson, in most of her early novels with prominent girl characters, suggests strong ties of sympathy, appearance, and outlook between mothers and daughters: "Mrs Newman and her daughter were so alike...they might have been the same person" (Birkin); and "Barbara... returned her mother's smile, and their eyes met in understanding." (Good Luck to the Rider) However, apart from Mrs Newman's occupation as a shopkeeper, mothers are chiefly portrayed in a domestic role, and single adult women have no part in her family stories at all. By implication the future options for Phipson's heroines who gain self-confidence and independence are disappointingly restricted.

There had been a time when Mrs Steadman had planned a career for herself as an artist and had studied at the Technical College. She was on the way to success when she married, and had then found that running a home in the country and bringing up children did not leave time for a career as well. Now she sketched only for pleasure when the opportunity offered, and did not regret her lost career. (Six and Silver, p8)

Is this a warning not to marry a country man? Phipson married and moved to the country, had two children and has become one of the most respected and prolific children's writers in Australia.23 Over thirty years separate Six and Silver and Turner's Jennifer J. They are very different books, and a comparison may appear
extraordinary, but Turner's story about Fidelia Firth's rebellion against her demanding homelife and the attractions of taking up her abandoned career does, notwithstanding its resolution, acknowledge the frustrations and difficulties of the choices some women feel they have to make.

In earlier chapters, I have suggested close ties between aspects of authors' careers, and the major concerns and patterns of their books. From Ethel Turner's diaries and correspondence, it is apparent that the difficulties of combining writing and domestic life provoked much frustration, and eventually gave rise to a sense of despondency about the worth of her work. With Phipson, Spence and Clark, we are not privy to the revelations of diaries and correspondence - and although all three authors have often talked and written of their work, none have commented that writing was a difficult profession to pursue in concert with family duties. All three are married with children, and Spence and Phipson did not fully begin their careers as published writers until they had young children. Phipson, in particular, writes of her early success as an author more in terms of good fortune than as hard work - in the same manner as Turner was reported to reflect on the writing of her novels. Perhaps in the fifties and sixties it was easier than earlier in the century to combine two such incompatible
occupations; but if so, it is odd that Phipson maintains the career-or-marriage choice (as with Mrs Steadman) of much earlier fiction. An impression to be gained from a reading of all the earlier family stories of Phipson, Spence and Clark, is that most women marry and have children (and this inference can be drawn from Spence's novels despite the occasional portrait of independent or creative women), are unlikely to work outside the home, and do not have any doubts about, or antipathy towards their domestic role. A similar impression of Australian women can be gained from articles on women and from women's magazines of the fifties and sixties. A challenge to this depiction of feminine complacency is the advocation of spirit, vigour and self-confidence for the young heroines. In significantly altering the pattern of compromise evident in earlier family stories, these modern authors seem to have established a different means by which to avoid direct conflict with common opinion about the nature and desires of girls and women.

It is in the wider depiction of family life that these modern novels, in comparison to family stories of the Turner era, display a conservatism that lessens the apparently uncompromising support of a 'new deal' for the heroines. Families in the novels of the Turner era are rarely happy. Very often one or more of the parents is dead or otherwise missing or disabled;
brothers and sisters argue, are jealous and fight; lack of money is a constant problem and the home itself is usually poorly run, dirty and chaotic. These appalling family conditions, along with weak and foolish fathers, cruel cowardly brothers and dull sisters, emphasize the good qualities of the heroine, even when she is as unlikely a mainstay as Judy Woolcot. Even Norah Linton, living with a very capable and independent family, is always the person to save the valuable sheep from the bushfire or bring help to an injured stockman. Although the family stories of the Turner era are very ambivalent about the 'correct' attitude to family life, and girls' roles in and out of the home, they nevertheless leave a more vigorous impression of female endeavour and strength than modern (less complex) family stories.

Family life in the modern novels of the 1950's and 1960's is not portrayed as entirely happy either, but because the heroine is fighting a very personal, introspective battle, the situation and characteristics of those around her is less important. Fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters are necessary to the modern heroine to firstly show-up her supposed deficiencies, and then later, to act as a chorus of approval as she changes and improves. Family life, and the way of life it entails, is not really closely examined or questioned as it was in the earlier novels.
The implication is that things are fine the way they are, it is only the heroine who has to 'prove' herself. It is revealing of the tenacity of old patterns, that when Mavis Clark uses an older heroine whose future as a woman is an immediate consideration; the weak father, useless brother and difficult homelife reappear. Sylvie herself is something of a nonentity, but her virtues once she 'improves' seem outstanding when compared to her relatives. Like Barbara and Karen, Sylvie changes for the better, finding that she is strong - but this strength is useful because she can then become the support for her family.

These early modern family stories with the new type of heroine undoubtedly reflect the expanding opportunities for girls in the fifties and sixties. Barbara and Karen seek to understand themselves, something the more radical Sybylla Melvyn in My Brilliant Career felt was necessary for happiness and self fulfillment. However, although positive change and growth are the major themes of these modern novels, the expectations that they, like earlier family stories, would be preoccupied with the heroine's future as an adult is, surprisingly, wrong. It is only when heroines are young women (as with Sylvie in The Min-Min) that aspects of earlier patterns re-emerge, specifically the tendency to experiment with family
structures. When the heroine is young (like Barbara or Karen), Spence and Phipson do not significantly rearrange the traditional family structure as a means of investigating future opportunities for their heroines, or in any other way question conventional social hierarchies. What would Phipson and Spence have done with Barbara and Karen in sequels? Questioning the structure of the family was once the major issue of family stories, and the disappearance of the debate from modern girls' fiction of the 1950's and 1960's, points to a conservatism that is more often (wrongly) associated with earlier books.
...at seventeen, how is one to know? Before my eyes was the travail of finding one's identity; the painful process of seeking and finding, often by trial and error, one's appointed destiny, bear traps in wait. Yet one's destiny...has a mystic and magic link, somehow, with one's roots...One is the product of the soil from which one grows.

Hesba Brinsmead, "How I Write for Teenagers"
While the unassertive timid heroine was a distinctive feature of contemporary family stories, the rebellious girl was still a popular figure in some girls' fiction. Both Eleanor Spence and Mavis Thorpe Clark who had depicted the struggles of unassertive girls to prove their 'worth' in novels with modern settings, also wrote historical novels which featured the more traditional figure of the rebellious girl. One other distinguished author, Hesba Brinsmead, whose first novel Pastures of the Blue Crane was published in 1964, also worked from the familiar pattern of the vigorous and outgoing heroine in family stories, but mostly in novels with modern backgrounds.

A popular type of Australian children's book in the 1950's and 1960's was stories of pioneering families and fictionalised accounts of the adventures of real life people from colonial days. All Australian family stories had invariably included some element of adventure, and those with historical settings allowed plenty of scope for dramatic incidents and thrilling climaxes. Unlike the nineteenth century Australian colonial adventure story, where action and event were far more important than the outlook of individual characters, the interaction of characters, and often the conflict of family members, is a central part of the modern pioneering novel. As well, with the
advantage of an historical perspective, the issues of land usage, treatment of aborigines, the importance of education, and the establishment of a social hierarch in Australia are debated in these (usually) historically accurate and well-researched books. Eleanor Spence wrote three historical family stories with a major girl character in the 1960's; *Lillypilly Hill* (1960) set in the 1880's, and *The Switherby Pilgrims* (1967) with its sequel *Jamberoo Road* (1969) both set in the 1820's. Mavis Thorpe Clark has written several novels set in the nineteenth century and one, *The Brown Land Was Green* (1956), set in the Victorian countryside of the 1840's, features a girl in a central role. All of the novels are about country life - in *Lillypilly Hill* it is the civilised and fairly comfortable rural life of a small township with a store, school and post-office - but the others are about living in the isolation and danger of frontier territory.

Of all the contemporary distinguished Australian children's authors, Spence has most consistently used the timid and unassertive heroine in her family stories, but in her three historical novels the heroine follows the pattern of the rebel whose aspirations are frustrated by the constraints of women's traditional role. The initial descriptions of Harriet
Wilmot (Lillipilly Hill) and Cassie Brown (The Switherby Pilgrims and Jamberoo Road) links them to the type of heroine familiar to any reader of nineteenth century domestic fiction.

Aidan glanced at his two sisters. As usual, they were dressed alike in gingham dresses and holland pinafores, but there all resemblance ceased. Rose-Ann's skin was smooth and pale as when she had left London four months ago, while Harriet's thin, pointed face was red with sunburn, and already beginning to freckle. Her pinafore was stained with blackberry juice, and one bootlace was undone. (Lillipilly Hill, p5)

Cassie at eleven should have been giving some thought to her manners and her dress, but she was not interested in these at all. She moved like a boy, with long strides and continual haste; her thick auburn hair straggled over her shoulders, and always appeared in need of brushing. Invited to choose garments for herself from the charity collection, she took whatever came first to hand, and gave no heed to their suitability in relation to her fair and somewhat freckled complexion. Misabella persevered, but she often worried in secret over this outspoken determined child who had so much intelligence, and so little of that highly desirable feminine quality - charm. (The Switherby Pilgrims, p20)

As well as the obligatory freckles and unruly hair, both girls are bookworms and Cassie wants to write, however both also have elder brothers whose education is regarded as far more important than their aspirations.

Aidan was a boy, so he had bookshelves, and a room to himself, and time to read as much as he wanted. But Harriet was always being summoned from her beloved books to practise the piano, or do her embroidery, or talk to visitors. (Lillipilly Hill, p16)
Why had a capricious and contrary fate sent Cassie to till the soil and herd cattle, while Francis, who wanted only to be a farmer, was sentenced to years of study he could not appreciate? \textit{(Switherby Pilgrims, p115)}

Harriet and Cassie are compared to other, more 'acceptable' little girls, Harriet to her sister Rose-Ann and Cassie to a fellow orphan Selina, and both girls feel frustrated and angry that their talents go unregarded while the ability to be neat, pretty and undemanding is rewarded. Cassie is one of ten orphans brought to Australia by Miss Arabella Braithwaite from the English village of Switherby. The oddly assorted group take up a land grant in the Illawarrra region of New South Wales and start to clear the land and to farm it. Cassie, contemplating a bleak future in England, sees Australia as a place where girls like her, who are clever and vigorous but not pretty or wealthy, can attain their ambitions.

As far as she was concerned, the sooner they all set out for New South Wales, the better. Cassie had led a quiet and drab life when her parents were alive, a struggling existence brightened only by her morning visits to the vicarage school, where she had unexpectedly discovered that she was clever. Missabella was proud of Cassie's quickness to learn, and Cassie responded by working hard both in and out of school hours. Only now was she beginning to realise that all this aptitude might lead nowhere. If she were a boy, then it were just possible to win through to real scholarship, but what could a girl do? And here was Selina, who disliked books and loved sewing, being told that she had a promising future!
Cassie stayed in the apple-tree until the September sunlight was slanting low over the churchyard wall, and dreamt of a far new country where all doors were open to even the poorest and plainest of orphan girls. (Switherby Pilgrims, p25)

Harriet in Lillipilly Hill has a more prosperous social position, but she too sees Australia as her only prospect for happiness.

Harriet looked up through the fruit trees towards the house. At the crest of the hill, just behind the cowshed, grew three huge old bluegums, black now against a pink and gold sky. 'One day I'm going to climb those trees,' said Harriet. 'And I'm going to fish in the creek, and explore in the bush, and talk to all those people down there. I never knew there were so many lovely things to do I'm not going to call London 'home' any more.' (Lillipilly Hill, pp27-28)

The heroine of Clark's The Brown Land Was Green, Henrietta Webster, is not regarded as a tomboy by her family, although her Aunt Belinda fears that in Australia "the finer things of life" including being "a lady" are not highly valued or even possible. Although Henrietta does make herself a pair of trousers on the long journey out from England, this is more to do with comfort than an act of rebellion. What she does share with Spence's Cassie and Harriet is a conviction that Australia, for girls, is the promised land.

She [Henrietta] looked down the valley of the two hills. The rain had passed during the night, leaving no cloud in the sky, and the sun shone warmly. Despite the discomfort of the dwelling behind her, she had no longing for London town, but rather an insistent desire to see what lay beyond the next hill. (The Brown Land Was Green, p58)
The threat to Henrietta's happiness is the prospect of a return to England. Henrietta's mother is dead and her father's sister, Aunt Belinda, has accompanied them to Australia as 'her duty' and in the hope of persuading the family to return to England. Henrietta makes it her task to ensure the Websters stay in Australia and, against the odds, through her courage and quick thinking, she saves the family from ruin and an ignoble return 'Home'.

The reasons why this sort of heroine, rather than the modern unassertive girl, is so appropriate to these novels about the making of a nation are similar to those that make Judy Woolcot an apt representative of Australia of the 1890's. For individuals who are limited by the traditional structure of their society, Turner's "long years sorrowful history", the prospect of a new land represents opportunity.

'It's all very well for you, Harriet,' said Aidan, with that cold condescension which his sister greatly disliked. 'You're just a girl, with no career to think about. You like it here, because you can do all sorts of things you wouldn't be allowed to do at home. But I want to go to a good school, and then to study law. How can I do that here?' (Lillipilly Hill, p25)

For these rebellious girls, whose nature only makes them misfits in England, Australia offers the chance to escape censure and make use of their talents. This aspect is very apparent in The Switherby Pilgrims where an analogy is drawn between Cassie and Eben, the
convict assigned to Arabella and the orphans to help on the farm.

'...I'm [Eben] lucky compared to some. But it's having no choice that's the trouble. I'm never free, you see.' Cassie nodded, for resenting restraint herself, she could understand the bitterness of continual lack of freedom. (Switherby Pilgrims, pp107-108)

When Eben is given his freedom, he has as much opportunity for advancement in Australia as a free settler, a situation that is somewhat puzzling to people like Miss Arabella who are still guided by the standards of 'home'. For the girls, "lack of freedom" means the restraints of conforming to appropriate female behaviour, and maybe in Australia they can avoid the restrictions of becoming ladies, "If I were back in Switherby, I should have to try and be a lady all my life. In the Illawarra, I won't need to bother much." These brave and outgoing girls represent the spirit of the new country, the promise inherent in making something new, and perhaps better, than what has gone before. Henrietta, Harriet and Cassie feel immediately in harmony with Australia despite its strangeness and discomforts as compared to England.

'It's not pretty and neat like our English fields and woods,' said Cassie, studying the massed green of the bush bursting from the confines of the shore. 'But I like it. It's so big and wild that it makes one feel really free.' (Switherby Pilgrims, p166)

Eleanor Spence in discussing her contemporary novel, The Green Laurel, sees "the salient theme of
children's literature of the sixties and seventies" as "coming to terms with the environment". This is what Harriet's brother Aidan has to do in Lillypilly Hill, he has to develop dormant characteristics in himself to meet the challenges of a new life that has both a different natural and social environment. However, this is not so with Harriet, or with Cassie and Clark's Henrietta, who arrive in Australia armed with all the traits considered appropriate for enduring (and enjoying) pioneer life. The girls like the lifestyle, and they find the country welcoming and beautiful, in contrast with characters like Aidan and Aunt Belinda who find Australia repellant and frightening.

As the schooner drew nearer the shore, Henrietta saw that though the guarding headlands were fairly high, they were not as fiercely-protesting as some other parts of the coast. Their slopes were more kindly, and the rocks at their base not quite as cruel. Between the protection of their two outstretched arms the great south rollers, with plumes curling like ostrich feathers, wooed the yellow warmness of the sand. Because the sea carried only a swell today, the rhythm of their wooing was musical instead of frightening, and it seemed to Henrietta that this new land, smiling in a late winter sunshine, was surely welcoming her. (The Brown Land Was Green, p10)

However, it is the privilege of modern authors to put doubts into their heroine's minds about the future possibilities for them (as girls and women) in Australia.

Cassie loved this place, and the free adventurous life that she lived here. The word 'unladylike' had not been spoken for weeks; ...she had turned twelve last week...Missabella had refrained from making her usual observation that Cassie must try
and behave more like a young gentlewoman and less like a boy. After all, it was Cassie's very boyishness, her energy and determination, that had been one of Missabella's chief supports.

No, thought Cassie, I cannot complain any longer that I am not allowed to be myself. The trouble is, I don't seem to know any more just what I am. When I worked at my lessons in Switherby, I at least knew that I was clever at book-learning. Here there are no books and no lessons, and although I'm so happy, it's rather as if I were drifting nowhere in particular. If only there were someone to talk to about the future...

(Switherby Pilgrims, pp102-103)

Having achieved the aim of remaining in Australia, the future as grown women still looms as a threat to the girls' individuality. Harriet in Lilypilly Hill adopts the same compromise as Jo March, "'I might look like a lady, but I shall feel just the same'"7 and Cassie in The Switherby Pilgrims whose future plans are "nebulous and confused", is left running over the orphan's new farm, "tangled hair flying and black-clad ankles unashamedly showing."8 However in Jamberoo Road, the sequel to The Switherby Pilgrims, Cassie is transformed into a model wife and mother of "four fine sons".

Of the three 'rebel' heroines, Cassie is particularly interesting because she is so obviously modelled on Jo March of Little Women. Cassie has the same physical characteristics of Jo, is impulsive, very warm-hearted and often moved to a mood of ecstasy, or as suddenly, to despair. As well, a sequel means that Cassie's progress is followed through girlhood to
adulthood and the prospect of marriage. Like Jo March - and like an even earlier forerunner of this type of character, Jane Eyre - Cassie does marry but on terms of partnership with a husband who is fashioned as an equal. Cassie marries Eben, the ex-convict she has taught to read and write. Like Jo March who would not marry rich and handsome Laurie, Cassie in marrying Eben refuses her other suitor, Edward, the son of a wealthy English landowner and relinquishes the prospect of an easy life in England. Cassie decides the hard life in Australia suits her, particularly when compared with what her role would be in England.

'At home young ladies visit each other, and take tea together, and talk about balls and clothes and things like that. You shall see, when we go back next year.'

'It doesn't sound like me,' Cassie observed lightly. (Jamberoo Road, p115)9

In Australia with Eben she sees herself as a crusader and "[Eben] had a pioneering spirit quite equal to her own."

In Jamberoo Road, Miss Arabella had hoped Cassie might marry wealthy Edward, "...and what parent or guardian did not see early matrimony as the perfect solution to a young lady's problems?"10 As it happens, marriage (although not to Edward), is the solution to Cassie's "nebulous" aspirations and this conclusion could be regarded as either an acknowledgement of the unfulfilled promise of a new
society, or a lack of imagination on Spence's part. Perhaps Cassie's marriage is intended as an historically accurate reflection of the 'fate' of most girls in the nineteenth century. However, although in The Switherby Pilgrims, Spence creates the unlikely situation of a middle-aged woman taking ten orphans from an English village to a remote and unpopulated area of colonial Australia, she is entirely conventional in determining a future for her heroine. Certainly every other aspect of Cassie's development from young girl to young woman relentlessly treads the path of hundreds of earlier heroines. Spence herself has acknowledged that she imitates family stories she read as a child, "My favourite books were the ones I would go on imitating in various disguises, as long as I could put typewriter keys to paper". Nevertheless, Spence's rebel heroines are pale imitations of the characters she herself enjoyed reading about in children's books. H.M. Saxby has commented that children's novels, like these four by Spence and Clark, lack the vigour of the early colonial novels. This sort of criticism is somewhat misplaced when comparing adventure stories to family stories with historical settings. However, if the modern novels are compared to other, earlier, family stories, they are lacking in 'vigour', particularly in regard to the depiction of the heroine. As pointed out earlier, Harriet and Cassie are very familiar figures to readers of girls'
fiction. Spence uses well-tried literary props to identify her heroines as tomboy-rebels, something Ethel Turner had done many years before with Judy Woolcot. What is interesting is that Cassie and Harriet are modelled on the tomboy-rebel heroines like Katy Carr and Jo March that pre-date Judy Woolcot, a character Ethel Turner developed to suit an Australian context. Erratic, will-o-the-wisp Judy is perhaps a more apt image of a young girl's prospects in Australia than Harriet or Cassie. While they share Judy's vitality, they lack the elusive sense of future possibilities that Judy embodied. Both girls quietly make their choices and look forward to neatly rounded-off futures. As rebellious characters they voice their objections to restraint but "wistfully" rather than with vigour or anger.

Francis went too, being classed as an able-bodied man, and Cassie watched him wistfully as he marched purposefully past the cattle-pen. She knew she should not regard the expedition as an adventure when Robin's life was at stake, but at least she could wish once again to be a boy, permitted to take part in the larger dramas and not forever relegated to the regions backstage. (Switherby Pilgrims, p162)

Cassie's wish could be contrasted with Betty's reaction in Lilian Turner's An Australian Lassie when, with something of a shock, she realises that her sex has irreversibly determined an inferior role in life.

'What's the good of a girl? What can a girl do? Don't you know anything about self-made women?'

John knew very little. In fact he too very much doubted the 'good of a girl'.13
Similarly, Harriet in *Lillipilly Hill* quite meekly accepts her 'fate' and is blackmailed into appearing ladylike in order to ensure the family stays in Australia. Clark's Henrietta doesn't remain 'backstage' as she goes out and finds her own adventures, but as her motivation throughout the novel is simply to stay in Australia, when that situation is achieved her future role is to care for the household, much the same as she would have done in England.

Although *The Switherby Pilgrims*, *Jamberoo Road* and *The Brown Land Was Green* are very entertaining novels, well-written, and apparently historically accurate, there is no sense that the authors themselves are overly concerned with the heroine's passionate struggles. As a result, the tomboy-rebel becomes a stereotype, not the complex and contradictory figure of earlier girls' fiction. Early rebels like Jo March, Katy Carr and Ethelred May, do appear to be cut from a similar pattern, but the way in which Spence in particular uses 'ready-made clothes', is a misrepresentation of what had been a very special relationship between author and character. Harriet, Henrietta, and Cassie follow closely the paradigm of the rebel heroine but their rebellion does not express to at all the same degree the anguish of their creators, the sense that they represent the ambition and struggles of their authors. In many ways they,
like the colonial setting, are period pieces, lending a
certain flavour of veracity to these historical
novels.14

This is less true of Clark's Henrietta - not
because there is a sense of identification between
author and heroine, but because the nature of
Henrietta's character is such that one does not expect
it. Henrietta is a handsome, independent-minded
adventurer (not 'adventuress' which has other,
inappropriate, connotations). This type of character
is a variation on the rebel-tomboy - a swash-buckling
version, still with unruly hair (but black rather than
red) and with 'sparkling' black or green eyes. She is
always less ambitious for a 'career' than the tomboy,
although it is inferred she could probably dash off a
novel or a painting if she wanted, but is usually too
occupied with adventures. Pixie O'Harris' Poppy
Treloar is an Australian example of this type of
heroine. In English novels she is often Irish or has
some association with gypsies.15 Ethel Turner used
elements of the adventurer-rebel in fashioning Judy,
particularly her dark hair and eyes, her lack of a
specific ambition and her habit of speaking 'Irish' on
occasions. Because the adventurer-rebel often has no
set goals such as being a writer or whatever, authors
using this type of character have often managed to
conclude their novels with less 'damage' to the
heroine, leaving her anticipating far horizons. Certainly aspects of this character aided Turner in successfully transforming Judy from a rebel into a tragic heroine, leaving her as an image of 'what might have been'. This was an important achievement because the nature of the family story and the conditions under which it exists, meant much of the success and attraction of the rebel heroine (in all her variations) depended on a lack of explicitness as to her future. Spence and Clark both fail to achieve this (even although Clark is using a character admirably suited to it) because of the way in which they use the rebel paradigm, and because of the manner in which they write. A number of critics have remarked that Spence and Clark are too apt to paint their characters neatly, and tidily conclude their novels:

...partially developed minor characters [in Spence's novels] often acquire a quality of 'memorability' greater than that of more central ones, and I wonder whether this is not because they are incomplete, and hence invite speculation by the reader as to the rest of their story. Is this then to suggest that Spence's characterisation is a trifle too explicit leaving little to the imagination, rather like the painter who renders the whole of his canvas in such painstaking detail as to distract attention from the focal point?16

The endings of [Clark's] books are altogether too 'pat'. Why must an author complete the story in every detail and wrap it up so neatly that it is unrealistic because it is so contrived?17

There is one modern children's author, Hesba Brinsmead,
who exploits the possibilities of the rebel (particularly the adventurer-rebel) and whose style is, in contrast to Spence's and Clark's, impressionistic. Although her use of the adventurer-rebel character is most evident in her novels with contemporary settings, it is first worth comparing her novel set in the past, *Longtime Passing* (1971), with Spence's and Clark's historical novels.

*Longtime Passing* is based on Brinsmead's own childhood but, "Like Grandfather Truelance's stories, this one is at least half-true...".18 Teddy tells the history of her parent's coming to Longtime and the establishment of the Truelance's little bush 'empire'. Teddy's birth and her childhood fill only the last one-third of the novel, but her nature and outlook are apparent from her interpretation of her family and their eccentricities and struggles, long before she is part of the cast. Although set in the 1920's, it is a novel about pioneering life. Longtime is a remote place surrounded by forests and only accessible by bullock team or on horse-back up a steep and rutted track. It is a strange and dangerous place which has broken the spirit of others who have tried to settle there. Edwin Truelance is an unlikely farmer, with a theology degree and a passion for music. Letty Truelance is just as unlikely a pioneer, "A pretty, fluffy city girl who used to have her hair curled every
day, and was never taught to do a hand's turn".

Somehow, their apparent unsuitability fits them for a life at Longtime and they, and their five children, thrive despite hardship and isolation. It is their isolation that is their salvation, as each does what has to be done without reference to common opinion.

Letty's housekeeping develops along original lines that enable her to cope with an arduous daily round of work.

It was true that Mother never dusted. She did plenty of other things, though. Sometimes she made treacle pudding, while she taught Ella and Mark and the Bunter children their letters. And, of course, she milked the cow, and did the washing at the wooden tubs...While she heard poetry and spelling, she darned endless socks, and applied patches of alien material to Father's morning-suit trousers, using large stitches. She also made pillow-slips out of flour sacks, and even sheets, washing the sacks carefully, unpicking the seams and stitching several together. She worked in the field each night until dark. She taught prayers and hymns to the children, and read them classical myths and legends and stories from exotic lands, and told them of her days as a bride in the Jave mountains, and of the singing gardens where water ran from pool to pool, and the golden carp swam. Mother did all these things...but dusting, never.

(Longtime Passing, p88)

The children are not harried into some role or another, and Teddy lives a life that seems quite fitting to her circumstances. She wears overalls because they can take the wear and tear of farm life and helps her father in the sawmill because, with the other children away at school, he needs someone to aid him. In a family of non-conformists, Teddy fits in. There is only the briefest acknowledgement that the
world outside Longtime would find her somewhat unacceptable.

'Mad as a snake, poor old Ed Truelance. All the Truelance brothers are crazy. And look at the way they've let that kid grow up so wild! Callin' a little girl Teddy, always lettin' her run about in boy's overalls and bare feet. Lettin' her work in the sawmill instead of goin' to school!' (Longtime Passing, p176)

Teddy isn't a rebel, she just has the makings of one, and the book concludes with her looking forward to the experience of school in the city "down below" where the delights of hot running water, electric light, and milk delivered in bottles makes it seem a wonderful, exotic place. Teddy's future is a "chance in the great, wide world", but what she might do is not specified. Rather it is implied that her childhood freedom as part of Longtime, and the non-conformist inheritance from her parents, will direct her.

Mother cried when I went off. I think she remembered what old Abel O'Leary had said, that day, years ago, when Boo was newly born. 'Kids are no good to yer. Just as they're worth feedin', they up and leave home. And then, what have you got, after all? Off they go and leave you-chasin' after the fairy gold.'

So she cried.

But she had forgotten the roots. Children, and older folk too, when they planted the freshly turned earth, somehow planted themselves; so that always and for ever, wherever they went, when a season had passed, and the sap ran down again...the roots would draw them back. (Longtime Passing, p183)
In *Longtime Passing*, Teddy has little to rebel against but it is apparent, nevertheless, that she is a non-conformist. Brinsmead conveys this aspect of Teddy without making her a fictional 'type'. In achieving this, the determinism of following fictional patterns is avoided. Harriet, Cassie, and Henrietta run so true to type that their futures are predictable from their initial descriptions, and neither Spence nor Clark embrace the opportunity to disrupt the pattern and thwart expectations. In *Longtime Passing*, Brinsmead details everything and everyone that contributes to the special nature of her heroine Teddy Truelance, but leaves Teddy's future (and the girl's own ideas about the future) vague and full of possibilities. It is ironic that *Longtime Passing* has been praised for its "sharply defined reality" for Brinsmead has described her own writing as "a cat's cradle of ideas". Spence and Clark, far from seeking the abstract, stress 'reality' and 'research'. Perhaps a fictional refuge is the only way of presenting outgoing, non-conforming heroines without overwhelming their vitality with the sort of setbacks rebels, especially rebellious girls, inevitably face. *Longtime* is a particularly apt refuge - a remote mountain plateau ringed by giant trees, and protected by the ancient magic of the Daruk people - however in her novels with modern settings, Brinsmead also 'shelters' her heroines.
The majority of Brinsmead's novels have contemporary settings and modern, outgoing girls for heroines whose characters are a combination of the tomboy-rebel and the adventurer-rebel. While most heroines of girls' books want to be independent, Amaryllis Jane Merewether (Ryl) the heroine of Brinsmead's first children's novel *Pastures of the Blue Crane*, is independent and has been since the age of three when her father left her in the care of a boarding pre-school! When Ryl is sixteen, her father dies and she is left quite wealthy. This wealth has to be shared with a grandfather, Dusty, she had not previously known of, and together this unlikely pair set off to the North Coast to investigate some property left to them in the will. Accustomed to living in comfort and having everything done for her, Ryl is dismayed by the house they find which has no proper bathroom, no carpets, no lining to the walls, and is miles from any shops. Dusty loves the small farm and wants to stay. He has been living for years on the pension in Melbourne in very poor conditions, and having a decent roof over his head is enough for him, particularly as the property had been his boyhood home. Provoked by Dusty's taunts about her 'soft living', Ryl stays at the farm and begins to make improvements, "spending money like water" according to her grandfather. Of course they decide to stay
permanently, and Ryl previously alone all her life, is glad to find a 'parent'.

Although Ryl had not been aware of it, she had never in her life come to any island of peace, or tower of safety. Always she had been on guard, on the alert in a mood of self-defence. Always it had been Ryl against the rest of the society in which she lived. Her native character was independent, and she had kept aloof from the ties of others, a lone wolf. The price of her independence had been an ever-present loneliness, like a nagging tooth. And now suddenly, this nagging small ache, this tense guardedness, was gone. (*Pastures of the Blue Crane*, p20)22

Ryl is the first of a series of heroines that have become something of a trademark for Brinsmead. She is brash, good-looking in a stylish way, impetuous, flamboyant and energetic, a contrast to contemporary heroines in novels by Spence, Phipson and Clark. Ryl has the individuality and drive of the rebel heroine, without the 'unladylike' traits of awkwardness and untidiness, or the disapproval of parents who want her to change. Ryl does change, but like the timid heroines that feature in other contemporary girls' fiction, 'growing-up' means growing in understanding and the contemplation of expanding horizons, not the threat of restraint and young ladyhood that dimmed the futures of more traditional rebel heroines. Ryl not only acquires a grandfather, she also gains a brother, Perry, and discovers that she, like Perry, is part Islander. Accepting that she is of mixed blood may have been a bitter experience for the 'old' Ryl but
having achieved a strong hold on her own identity she can cope with this added dimension.

'After all, I'm no different from before. I'm still me, just as Perry's Perry! I'm just descended from a Samoan, instead of from some cockney convict! And I'm Australian!' (Pastures of the Blue Crane, p203)

Brinsmead had intended there be more for Ryl to accept, as in the first draft of Pastures of the Blue Crane, Perry was illegitimate, but the "first publisher's reader who saw it, cried out in horror, that this could not be done."23 As it is however, Ryl's sense of security is linked equally with a relationship to place and to ties of blood, "Heredity and environment are a cord woven of two strands."24 Like all the heroines of Australian family stories since Judy Woolcot, Ryl is helped by a sense of companionship or empathy with her natural environment or some creature from nature. Waking after her first night in the North Coast farm house she sees "a fanciful bird" in the paddock,

Ryl kicked aside the sheet and swung her legs to the floor. The warm air gave a feeling of lightness and luxury...The grass felt rough and clean beneath her feet. She almost ran to the rusty barbed-wire fence of the paddock where the pink matel-grass began, then moved stealthily towards the long-legged bird. She was twenty feet from him when he stretched out his neck and wings and rose, gliding and soundless, to skim away over the paddocks, over a southerly wind-break of tall old sugar-cane and so out of sight.

Her head tilted, her black hair polished-silver like the grass and the bird's dark breast in the early sun, she stretched out her thin bare arms
and stood poised, as though herself ready for flight, young and transient. A Never Bird from some nest of childhood, resting before its long flight. (Pastures of the Blue Crane, p47)

Dusty tells her that it is a blue crane,

'Probably born in this same paddock...Probably comes back every year, when he's tired of travelling. Has his bit of a spell here. Refreshes his spirit, as you might say. Probably come back here to end his days, that bird will. Queer creatures. Like to die where they originated. Something in their blood that brings them back.' (Pastures of the Blue Crane, p93)

The crane is a symbol for Dusty, but its flight represents Ryl's future. All the new friends she has made (in spite of her snobbish ways and ill-temper) are studying or working, and although she tells them to "stop badgering me about what I should 'do'", she is confused about what she wants out of life. It is only when she begins to care for someone else, Dusty, that she becomes "filled with resolve", first to make him a success and later to plan for herself. Once her 'base' is established she, like the blue crane, sets out "searchin' for something better", but as Dusty comments "when the tarradiddle's all over, back he'll come."

The joy and vitality of Ryl's experience in the world has not met with the general approval of
children's literary critics.

The Brinsmead world is like her heroines: attractive, neat, spruce, sparkling, clean. It is a romantic world, where even the garbage probably comes gift-wrapped. It is a world where troubles of all kinds come and go without really doing more than ruffle the surface of the pleasant, bland lives.25

Mrs Brinsmead can write with a wise understanding of human problems, but she can also be sidetracked by her own femininity and can be too subjective. Her problem is that she is inescapably a romantic disguised as a realist by her veneer of modernity.26

Comments such as these indicate how important a certain brand of 'realism' had become in Australian children's literature, and Saxby's and Norman's remarks indicate how readily one author's representation of life could be interpreted as idealistic if it did not fit a critic's view of what is practical and truthful.

Brinsmead has pointed out that what she does in her novels is try to paint "the shape of truth",

...even a story-teller who tries to be honest, may yet never unravel truth from fiction! All we can be sure of, at the last count, is the shape. So I cling to the shape of truth...27

Compared to other girls' fiction, Ryl's circumstances do seem too good to be true. She has no family to mould her, no need to depend on anyone for a home or money. She does not even have to depend on herself to provide a comfortable future because she has everything given to her with no strings attached. Ryl's circumstances are, however, another refuge like Teddy's Longtime. In this novel, as in Longtime Passing,
Brinsmead creates a background from which a girl can step into the wider world with an outlook that might stand her in good stead. As novels about girls seeking to determine their future, Brinsmead successfully establishes images of possibilities without reference to the obstacles that earlier writers of girls' fiction, and contemporary writers of historical fiction, so often detailed.

Maybe a story, rather than a textbook, can be a window on the world. A story can show a far horizon, or let you stand in another person's shoes. A story can weave a cats cradle of ideas strong enough to hold abstract things.28

The history of girls' fiction has been a saga of compromises, subterfuge and constant tension between what earlier writers like Lilian Turner (and modern critics), termed 'reality' and 'romance'. The 'reality' was that girls were (are) expected to act in certain ways - and the 'romance' that very often they wanted to do things considered unsuitable for their sex. It is revealing of very ingrained prejudices that Brinsmead's novels are criticised for being "romantic", and thus "feminine", when she discards some of the situations that are usually employed to make the rebel heroine's path as thorny as possible. For heroines like Ryl the "process of seeking and finding" is still painful, but Brinsmead provides a touch of Utopia to the world of girls' fiction in an attempt to expand the horizon.
"The writer, like any other person, grows and alters and develops with time and circumstances. His or her books will inevitably reflect this pattern of growth, separated from the reality by distance, imagination, and much embroidery."
Eleanor Spence, 1981.1
Joan Phipson and Eleanor Spence have had lengthy and distinguished careers as children's writers. In the thirty years since their first novels, attitudes to children's fiction have changed considerably. Whereas earlier writers such as Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce were exhorted to turn out 'much of the same' during their careers, modern children's authors have been encouraged to develop their craft, to experiment and expand their themes and writing techniques. A generalisation which applies to Phipson and Spence, and to many other prominent authors of children's fiction, is that their books have become increasingly complex and sophisticated. Earlier, I have examined the sort of complexity which existed in what could be termed the 'traditional' form of the family story, and the complications which arose from writing about rebel heroines in a manner satisfactory to authors, readers and adult 'censors'. In contemporary family stories, the complexity of the novel does not arise from the tension between "forces demanding [women's] submissions and [women's] rebellious assertions of personhood"2, but from the sort of weighty issues authors choose to write about.

From a focus on the troubles, set-backs and achievements of the heroine, family stories by Phipson and Spence have altered to become forums for
discussions of different, although possibly related, concerns. In the 1950's Joan Phipson and Eleanor Spence were the first to significantly alter the family story and since then they have continued to break new ground. Writing in a literary environment that supported innovation in children's literature, these two authors have in their later novels, expanded the scope of the family story beyond domestic concerns. What is important to determine from their more recent novels, is how changes of direction in their work have effected the nature of the family story.

One outcome of the tendency towards innovation in children's literature, was the introduction of a new type of character in the family story, the sensitive boy who feels at odds with his peers and with society in general. For a time, this character replaced the unassertive heroine in many of Phipson's and Spence's novels, breaking down the traditional focus on a major girl character in family stories. Eleanor Spence's first seven novels all featured major girl characters, with boys having important, although secondary, roles. Beginning with The Nothing Place (1972), this focus changed, and her next five novels had major boy characters. 3 Phipson made an earlier, but more gradual alteration. Although Phipson's Good Luck to the Rider made a major contribution towards the development of the contemporary heroine in family stories, a girl
character rarely featured so prominently in her other novels. Both girls and boys had major roles in her first nine novels which were often about mixed groups of children, but in the 1970's boy characters predominated. In addition, together with the change in sex of the major role, Phipson also moved away from her earlier chronicles of family life and adventure into fantasy, introducing a mystical element to her books whilst maintaining a background of family life and relationships.

The change to major boy characters by Spence and Phipson was influenced by the nature of the contemporary heroine they had introduced into the Australian family story. The theme of an individual succeeding in the face of difficulties in their environment or deficiencies in their own personalities was equally relevant to a protagonist of either sex. The emergence of the sensitive boy character was a positive sign of expanding horizons in children's fiction and an acknowledgement that boys, too, were subject to conformist pressures. It was also a sign of a tendency by publishers and critics not to designate children's books as particularly for boys or girls. This may have been prompted by a desire to overcome any implied stereotyping in these distinctions, but unfortunately one of the results of 'co-ed' children's fiction meant, in the 1970's, fewer major roles for
girls. Like the unthinking adoption of that grammatical convention whereby the masculine pronoun can stand for either sex, a boy character appears to have been regarded as more acceptable to both sexes!

Both Spence and Phipson wrote about boys who did not comfortably fit their society. The Phipson hero is a boyish version of the capable Australian bushman - similar to Bruce's Jim and Wally in regard to his knowledge, expertise and cool head - but unlike them, he is not articulate or good looking, and is shy of any close relationships with other people. It is apparent from Phipson's first novels that she had an interest in this sort of boy character. Prickly, dour, Jack Steadman in *Six and Silver* (1954) is the earliest version of this type of hero, but it is Bobby Thompson in *The Boundary Riders* (1962) who sets the pattern for the majority of later Phipson heroes;

> At eleven Bobby was thin, freckled and silent, with pale blue eyes and bony knees that generally had scabs on them. He was not a boy that motherly ladies longed to cuddle, nor had he ever been. Even when his hair still bore traces of the infant gold and his face was still softly round and unfreckled, his glance from the blue eyes was remote and calculating, and his mouth was close and secret. He was accustomed to working out his own problems, and he kept his own counsel.5

Willy in *The Cats* (1976) is another withdrawn and somewhat secretive character.6 In *The Cats*, after boasting of their family's lottery win, Jim and his younger brother Willy are kidnapped by Socker and his
dupe Kevin, and taken to a lonely house in the bush. Things do not go well for Socker and the reason appears to be somehow connected with quiet, formerly timid Willy who seems to have prior knowledge of events, and a strange empathy with the huge feral cats that live in the house. Very odd and frightening things happen. In the face of danger, Willy reveals previously unsuspected qualities of courage, perseverance and leadership, and saves the other boys from disaster. This changing pattern of leadership in *The Cats* is also a major part of *The Boundary Riders* and of *The Way Home* (1973), where good-looking and apparently 'manly' boys are shown-up as inadequate in certain stressful, and usually fantastic, situations.

Spence's heroes are somewhat different from Phipson's, and in her books with major boy characters there are usually two heroes, one a socially acceptable boy, the other less acceptable. Shane in *The Nothing Place*, Rowan in *Time to Go Home* and Justin in *A Candle for Saint Antony* are ordinary boys, not particularly talented and not overly sensitive, but they change when they meet other boys who are different. A persistent theme in these books, as in her earlier novels with major girl characters, is that to be an outsider, or at least understand the fears and attitudes of those who are different, strengthens an individual. The lines by Goethe quoted in *A Candle for Saint Antony* are a
particularly apt expression of Spence's major preoccupation;

Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent the darksome hours,
Weeping and watching for the morrow,
He knows ye not, ye heavenly Powers.9

Although unlike Phipson, Spence introduces no element of fantasy, she does stress the need to experience a sort of enlightenment that feeds the spirit. Rowan, Justin and Shane each come to learn something about others that adds depth to their own characters. Shane befriends the deaf boy Glen, Rowan the aboriginal, Kippy, and Justin the Viennese Rudi - three boys who for different reasons are unacceptable members of Australian 'boydom'. These friendships, between outwardly 'acceptable' boys and others handicapped physically and socially will, it is implied, save Rowan, Glen and Shane from mediocrity, and there is no worse sin than that in Spence's novels!

Rowan, Glen and Shane, like Faith in The Summer In Between and Lesley in The Green Laurel, all learn lessons about themselves and about others that will, it is suggested, make them better people. There are many other similarities between Phipson's and Spence's boy characters and the unassertive heroines of their earlier books. However, there are important differences between the overall patterns of Spence's and Phipson's novels with major boy characters and
those featuring girls. The manner in which boy outsiders are compared to more socially acceptable boys, is quite different from the way in which the timid heroine is compared to more outgoing and successful girls. Lesley in *The Green Laurel* or Barbara in *Good Luck to the Rider* do not eventually 'show-up' their outgoing sisters at times of stress in the way that, for instance, Bobby's competence is compared to the older boy's inadequacies in *The Boundary Riders*, or Rudi's moral courage is compared to Justin's wish to remain 'one of the boys' in *A Candle for Saint Antony*. In addition, the outsider boys are very rarely criticised by girls, whereas heroines like Barbara and Karen are usually put down by boys (often their brothers), but supported by female friends or relatives. This suggests a positive picture of female support, but at the same time, a reluctance to criticize the socially acceptable notion of girlish behaviour. This aspect of the modern novels recalls earlier family stories, like Lilian Turner's Betty Bruce stories, where authorial support is evident for both Betty the rebel, and for her much more acceptable sister. However, as the timid heroine is undergoing a process of change which is socially acceptable, so there is in the end, no conflict between them and girls who represent 'normality'. This suggests that the family stories with boy characters, are far more
critical of social norms, than are Phipson's and Spence's novels with heroines.

Neither Phipson's nor Spence's outsider heroes castigate themselves in the way outsider heroines like Barbara and Karen reflect on their supposed deficiencies. The boys, although not highly regarded by others, do not lament their unattractive appearance, or inability to play sport, or lack of popular social success. Neither do they alter their nature or outlook and thereby become more acceptable or conventional. Rather Spence's Glen, Kippy and Rudi, and Phipson's Bobby, Willy and Tony are the stimulus for change in other, perhaps narrow-minded people. This recalls in part the rebel heroine who is a victim of other people's lack of understanding and vision. Yet, the rebel heroine always does have to modify her behaviour, whereas these boys do not make any gestures towards conformity - they in the end have to be accepted on their merits. Bobby, at the conclusion of The Boundary Riders, is still as taciturn and outwardly as unloveable as ever. Rudi in Spence's A Candle for Saint Antony, rejects the values of an Australian society and returns to Vienna. This pattern is quite different to that in novels with timid heroines who inevitably have to change, even although the suggestion is that people have misjudged their 'latent' good qualities. That these differences are apparent when
the sex of the protagonist changed in family stories, supports the contention that certain literary patterns are determined by the sex of the major character. In addition, the persistence and consistency of these patterns in novels by Phipson and Spence - two authors whose novels initially appear quite disparate - implies that the patterns are very firmly entrenched.

The introduction of the sensitive boy character was an indication of the authors' developing confidence in their craft. Both Spence and Phipson have commented that they first wrote about girls because that is what they knew well.

The only thing I think I aimed at in Good Luck to the Rider was to write a story that I thought the kind of horse mad girl I used to be would enjoy...In it there are one or two boarding school scenes which I drew totally from my own boarding school experience... [Joan Phipson]

For my earlier stories, I selected girls as main characters because I had been a girl myself, and my memories of the way a girl felt, etc. were often drawn upon. Introducing boys as protagonists came when firstly, I had growing sons, and secondly, as I gained confidence as a writer. [Eleanor Spence]

Spence's and Phipson's growing confidence was also expressed in other ways in their novels; particularly the manner in which they began to focus on certain complex themes. Both Phipson and Spence have commented on continuing preoccupations in their writing and how, over the years, these have come to dominate their novels. For Phipson, this theme is "man's relation
with the earth he lives on and with the universe about him"¹³ and that "the great gap...developing between urban life and the countryside, ultimately is going to end in some kind of catastrophe".¹⁴ Spence's preoccupation continues to be how families function, and more particularly of late, how heredity, culture and religion effect individuals and influence families, and by extension, the wider community.¹⁵ The introduction of boy characters to their novels corresponded with a more complex and experimental exploration of these themes. A comment by Spence suggests that she felt more comfortable using boy characters when writing about "deeper" issues.

When asked by young readers (who seem to come up with more subtle questions every year) if any character in my books is actually me, I usually start mumbling and dodging, because I recall with a kind of guilt the number of literary, well-read, sensitive and imaginative heroes and heroines who emerge in so many of my books, to say nothing of the independent and ambitious ones like Harriet in Lillypilly Hill and Cassie in Switherby Pilgrims and Jamberoo Road.

I'm not saying I really was like that. Rather, these characters are romantic images of what I sometimes was. And they are the kinds of people I loved to read about in my own childhood. I think that as I grow older, becoming further removed in time from the days of my youth, I tend to recall some of the deeper, less obvious aspects of myself-as-child-and-teenager, and this has led to the creation of characters like Rowan in Time To Go Home, and Rudi in A Candle for Saint Anthony. The fact that they are both boys, whereas earlier I tended to use girls as central figures, may have a significance in itself.¹⁶
In Spence's novels there is a dramatic alteration in her depiction of families beginning with *The Nothing Place*, her first novel featuring a major boy character. Unlike her early novels where home is a relatively stable and safe refuge for the heroine, homelife in her later novels is often unhappy or difficult. Rowan and Shane are from single parent families, Justin's parents provide a materially comfortable home but little else, and Glen's parents are insensitive to the problems he experiences with his deafness. In *The October Child* (1976) where the family is at first happy, this changes when a new baby is born who is eventually diagnosed as autistic. Douglas, the major character in this novel, is a somewhat different hero to Rowen, Shane and Justin, in that he is a sensitive and nervous boy, but like them his outlook is altered by a boy who is 'different', in this case his baby brother Carl. In these family stories featuring major boy characters, Spence experiments with the structure of the family in a similar manner to writers of 'traditional' family stories, except that the purpose of the experiment is not specifically related to the role of girls and women. Why she does not do this in earlier novels, may be yet another indication of the conservatism of books like Patterson's *Track*, *The Year of the Currawong* and *Lillipilly Hill*, and an apparent reluctance to question the role of women in society. The nature of early novels by both Spence and Phipson suggest that they
were happy with the contemporary position of women. Indeed, Spence has said that she sees girls "as strong, getting-on type of characters" whereas boys "have more behavioural problems". In writing about modern society and complex issues, both authors in the 1970's, appear to have regarded boy characters as more suitable representations of their themes.

Phipson and Spence would also have been influenced by critical attitudes towards girl's fiction when they chose boy characters for their more sophisticated novels. Heroines in children's books in general, are invariably associated with domestic concerns. In addition, the idea that children's books with heroines in domestic settings are romantic or sentimental has persisted. In the past, very little credence has been given to the view that family stories addressed real and pertinent problems, especially the difficulties experienced by girls. The most recent critical work on Australian children's literature still makes a distinction between conflict within the family and troubles with the 'wider world'.

...alienation and rebellion are seen in general as masculine states of mind. It may be argued that Sylvie of The Min-Min...is an alienated heroine. Yet there is an an important difference; Sylvie's quarrel is with her father, not with society as a whole, and her reconciliation takes place within the family.

There is nothing surprising about this uneven division of nonconformist roles. Children's
fiction in Australia has so far heard few echoes from the women's movement,...Feminine conflicts begin and end at home; masculine conflicts are with the wider world and do not necessarily end in reconciliation.19

This comment is an illustration of the widely held belief that rebellion in the home is not a reflection of discontent with the wider society. Keeping in mind the adult predilection for children's books in the 1960's and 1970's to address 'serious' issues, a heroine might have seemed an inappropriate character in novels about 'harsh reality'.

Although, as the Australian children's book critic Walter McVitty points out, authors have developed "inevitably" towards novels that are "sober songs of experience",20 it is also true that authors have been subtly directed to meet a demand for children's fiction to discuss the darker side of life or confront 'harsh reality'. The type of book preferred by the adult arbitors of standards in children's fiction is apparent from the list of novels that have won the annual Children's Book Award.21 Certainly the sort of book enjoyed by Spence's heroine Rachel Blackwood in The Seventh Pebble (1980) has not featured in the winner's list.

Book number three seemed very promising indeed; right from the first chapter it launched itself into a tale of strange happenings in a ruined castle, well fitted out with secret passages, a moat, and noises in the night. The children mixed up in these affairs were the kind Rachel already
knew well, from many previous books. Whether they were called Meg or Babs or Dick or Tony, they were always full of zest and fun, made snowballs and ate plum pudding in winter, went bathing in the sea and got cut off by the tide in summer, and attended the sorts of boarding-schools where there were midnight feasts in the dorm., or escapes from upstairs windows on ropes made of bed-sheets.22

Phipson's account of the reception of her attempt at a 'funny book', Helping Horse (1974), is indicative of the preference (by adults) for children's books to be earnest.

It was odd about this book. It was not meant to be any kind of a blockbuster. It was simply meant to entertain and amuse. I tried to be funny but it brought me two ...of the most savage reviews I think I've ever had... I won't try to be consciously funny again.23

Bruce and Turner often complained about being kept to a formula by their publishers and the public; for contemporary authors, who were in the main encouraged to be innovative, there was, nevertheless, more subtle pressure to conform to a certain standard.

In the 1980's, Spence and Phipson returned again to a major girl character in two novels, The Seventh Pebble and The Watcher in the Garden (1982). Although Spence has commented that she was "even[ing] things up",24 it was for her quite a radical change after five novels with male protagonists. A number of Phipson's novels prior to 1982 had girl characters who took quite major roles, but The Watcher in the Garden focuses on a heroine, whereas earlier novels such as The Way Home and Keep Calm (1978), do not. With a return to a major
girl character after many years of experiment and growth as writers, these two novels by Phipson and Spence demonstrate both the continuing and changing concerns of the family story.

The setting for The Seventh Pebble is an ex-shale mining town, Hollybush Flat, in 1938. There is talk of war and a drought is threatening. Hollybush Flat is a very insular community with a rigid and complex class structure. However the foundations of the community’s allegiances are shallow, based mainly on strict codes of appearance and habit;

She [Mrs Blackwood] took off her gloves and overcoat and, last of all, the black, felt hat adorned with a shiny bunch of cherries. It was her winter hat. In summer she wore a broad-brimmed, navy straw with daisies. Like Mrs Mackay and Mrs Ferguson, she never went shopping in Bloomfield without either hat or gloves, just as Rachel and Joy and Amy never went to school without shoes and socks. (The Seventh Pebble, p7)

Rachel's father is the local doctor, her mother is involved in the C.W.A., and her elder brother, Daniel, is home from boarding school for the holidays. It is August and the winter is putting on a burst of cold weather before the spring. Rachel, in a quiet way, seems dissatisfied with her well-ordered life. Her desire had been for silver-frost on her tap shoes, 'like Joy's', but her clumsiness at dance class and her expulsion from the concert-group put an end to her hopes to emulate Shirley Temple. This apparently minor failure to fit the approved pattern for little girls in
the Flat is the beginning of Rachel's tendency to look more closely at what passed for respectability and order in her community. When a poor Catholic family, the Connells, arrive in town, Rachel is intrigued by the emphasis the townsfolk place on the Connell's Irishness and religion.

'Connell,' repeated Mrs Blackwood. 'That's an Irish name, isn't it?'
'I suppose it is. But we have the Scots and the Welsh, and you're English—why not the Irish as well?'
He was smiling but his wife looked faintly shocked.

'But they would be Roman Catholic, surely.' 'There's some of them at school,' offered Rachel, hurrying over any errors in grammar. 'They have Scripture in the weather-shed.' (The Seventh Pebble, p12)

Rachel is attracted to Bridget Connell with her tall tales and her description of the family's religion which to Rachel seems exotic and enthralling.

The Connell's father is absent; building the Sydney Harbour Bridge according to Bridget; but this is one more suspicious difference that sets the township in opposition to the family. Bridget is an old hand at dealing with criticism, hurling abuse back at those who insult her, but Rachel is puzzled as to why the townsfolk, usually indifferent, should be so roused by one, apparently inoffensive family. What Rachel does realise is that her world is changing: her parents spend their nights anxiously listening to the radio; her brother Daniel at seventeen has decisions to make
about his future and he is unusually aggressive and unsetted; and the dry spring has lead to a hot and threatening summer which erupts in a wild bushfire which destroys an orchard, and almost burns down the Connell's house. The fire is blamed on an escaped convict who has been hiding in the hills - Mr. Connell. After the fire, in a scene reminiscent of other conflicts in earlier Spence novels, a gang of youths attack the Connell's house, smashing windows and screaming insults, "Come on out and fight, you dirty tykes!".

The Connell's move on, Daniel decides against joining the Army and goes back to school, and a munitions factory, supposedly coming to the Flat, will mean Dr. Blackwood will regain business lost when the shale mine closed down. However, for Rachel, everything has changed. Initially Rachel's sympathy and liking for the Connell's is partly because, unlike the rest of the town, she is ignorant of the things that divide Catholics and Protestants. Rachel has had no religious training and, provoked by Bridget's references to the Blessed Virgin, startles her mother by asking, "What's a virgin?". The twist at the conclusion of the novel is that Rachel learns she is Jewish and that Mr Blackwood comes from a Jewish German
It seemed as interesting as something in a storybook, a piece of family history that outshone even Bridget's tales of King Kevin...
From now on, she was Jewish. It didn't seem to mean very much.
But before she went to sleep that night, there came unbidden into her mind the last lines of the poem she had recited at the school concert:

'The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
How many miles—to where? (The Seventh Pebble, pp169-170)

Rachel likes the Connells just as much when she does understand a little more about what is supposed to divide them. She is glad to find she too belongs to the assorted group that has scripture in the weather-shed, and it is suggested that Rachel will be aided in her life's journey by her non-conformity.

The title of the novel, "The Seventh Pebble", refers to the youngest Connell, Little Pat's habit of setting out a row of pebbles on door steps to represent his family. Rachel suggests it may be a magic charm, but Dermot Connell says, "There's nothing magic about Little Pat". However, the Connell's need all the protection and good fortune they can get, and Little Pat's ceremony does seem to help guard the things he holds dear, his family and Larry his pet lizard. The eldest Connell, Maeve, is pregnant after a relationship with Billy Finch, who later is the leader of the attack on the Connell's house. When the Connell's are leaving
the Flat, Pat again sets out his pebbles - stones
Rachel has gathered and is anxious to see arranged on
the step.

The bus was coming. Little Pat looked around at
the faces of his family, then at Rachel. Finally,
he put out his hand for the pebbles.

He counted out seven, and put the rest in his
pocket. The seven he arranged carefully on Mrs
Appleyard's step.

'What's the seventh one for?' asked Rachel. 'For
Joey?'
'No,' said Pat, with a radiant smile. 'It's for
our new baby.'

They climbed into the bus, and the five sisters
and brothers sat in a row along the back seat...

As Rachel turned to go, Mrs Appleyard appeared
with her broom, and swept the pebbles off the
step.
'That's the last we'll see of them,' she said.
(The Seventh Pebble, p171)

Rachel can't so simply sweep away the Connells. For
her, now aware that she has a special identity, the
pebble ceremony is an important symbol of unity. The
sort of fellowship she was supposed to share with the
community of Hollybush Flat, based on wearing hats and
gloves and longing for Shirley Temple curls, is set
against her realization that she, as a Jew, has a
special relationship with many people who have gone
before, almost as exciting an association as Bridget's
tales of her famous forebear King Kevin!

Rachel is not a rebel in the mould of Judy Woolcot
and neither is her development the focus of the novel.
Whereas the theme of conforming, of fitting some
acceptable mould is as central to The Seventh Pebble as it has been in all previous family stories, the issue of conformity is not centered exclusively on Rachel. By creating in Rachel an 'observer character', Spence has been able to expand the scope of the family story without sacrificing the concerns of the heroine. Rather, in The Seventh Pebble, Rachel's growth towards independence and autonomy is emphasised by placing individual needs in the context of, firstly, an inward-looking township, and then, against the world scene of mounting tension and hate. The pressures on Rachel to conform are compared by implication to the violence resulting from suspicions about the Connells - and looking to the future beyond the timespan of the novel - to the horrors of Hitler's Jewish 'solution'. In doing this, the heroine's struggles are not shown as disruptive, but rather are allied to positive forces for goodwill in the world as a whole.

In Joan Phipson's The Watcher in the Garden, the heroine is a rebel and her actions are both disruptive and violent. Catherine (Kitty) Hartley, "fifteen and a bit", is the thorn in the collective side of her otherwise happy and prosperous family. Mr Hartley is the bank manager in a small town, presumably somewhere in the Blue Mountains district of New South Wales, Mrs Hartley does charity work and their eldest child, Diana; well-mannered, good-looking, with an equable
temperament, is a great contrast to Kitty, whose every word or action seems to bring conflict with her family or trouble to herself.

Her head, at this knife-edge moment, was tumultuous with thoughts wild, violent and black. Her heart, demurely concealed beneath the simple summer dress, pounded her ribs with the rage that consumed her. (The Watcher in the Garden, p5)

How could she explain the feeling that was always there, that inside her there was and had always been a gap waiting to be filled? In her mind? In her heart? She did not know. But it was there, and she knew it caused all her difficulties. (The Watcher in the Garden, p17)

Kitty's anger is not directed at anything specific, and her family is at a loss to understand what troubles her, apart from some sort of generalised malevolence on her part. They are on tenter-hooks regarding her temper and their tentativeness when approaching her, very obvious to the sensitive Kitty, only serves to heighten her rages.

Her head shot out from among the bedclothes. Mrs Hartley noticed, sadly but without surprise, that her expression was not of one just woken from a deep sleep. The hostility in the wide open eyes of her daughter was familiar, if daunting. Mrs Hartley steeled herself and said, 'It's the Red Cross today, you know. There's such a lot to be done.' (The Watcher in the Garden, p8)

Kitty represents an amalgam of the old and the new in girls' fiction. The familiar signposts of the tomboy are present; Kitty baulks at wearing dresses, she is physically active, courageous and passionate. Like hundreds of rebel heroines before her, she is
compared to her more easy-going and acceptable sister, Diana, who is pretty, amiable and sympathetic to others. Like the Australian heroines of the fifties and sixties, Kitty's difficulties are mostly attributed to deficiencies in her own nature, and not to the machinations of others. In *The Watcher in the Garden* Phipson takes all these familiar motifs of girls' fiction and explores the effect of rebellion in the context of the modern inward-looking heroine. In a very different manner to earlier girls' books with rebel heroines, the ugly and damaging effects of rebellion are emphasized,

> The momentary black rage was her despair. It had not occurred to her it was her family's despair, too. (*The Watcher in the Garden*, p70)

Kitty seems to be an extreme example of the spirited heroine whose energy overruns the limitations of her situation. Judy Woolcot in *Seven Little Australians* is described as having quicksilver instead of blood in her veins, fizzing over with an excess of energy that leads her to dangerous exploits. Kitty is like Judy, although without Judy's joy of living. In a comfortable and well-ordered household there is no place for Kitty's unusually strong emotions, and so she 'erupts' from time to time, bitterly resenting herself and her family afterwards. It is after yet another violent outburst and the subsequent family upset, that Kitty finds Mr Lovett's garden. When she lies on the
ground, she feels as if her identity is merged with the
garden, and comes away feeling healed of her hurts.

In keeping with the themes of earlier Phipson
novels, The Watcher in the Garden has a mystical
element that lends an exotic touch to what is, in its
basic structure, a family story. Kitty comes to depend
on the garden as a refuge and on the friendship she
establishes with blind Mr Lovett. He is the only
person she knows who seems to understand her special
nature, that is, until she meets Terry, another visitor
to the garden. Terry, like Kitty has a "peculiarly
strong personality" and is unusually sensitive to
"mood and atmosphere".26 However unlike Kitty, Terry
has a target for his anger, Mr. Lovett and the garden,
part of which his father wants in order to set up a
garage. Terry's rage is motivated by class:

He felt strongly for the disadvantaged, the
unlucky, among whom he classed himself, and for
those many who should have had more, but who,
through the scheming of nebulous characters he was
prepared to hate, had less. For his father he had
contempt, knowing that in his father's position he
would have made a better job of life. But in
spite of that he pitied him. Never far away was
the wish, encouraged by his mother, to strike some
kind of blow, perhaps not so much with the idea of
helping his father, as in revenge for what his
father had to put up with. Revenge was something
he was much in favour of. (The Watcher in the
Garden, p113)

Terry plots to kill Mr. Lovett, and the garden reacts to
Terry's viciousness by trying, in turn, to kill him.
Kitty, aware of Terry's plans, is also hunted by him,
and a very elaborate cat and mouse game develops between the two teenagers, Mr. Lovett, and the garden. Eventually it is Kitty's strength of mind that aids her in preventing Terry from killing her friend. She and Terry find they can look into each other's mind and it is this ability that Kitty uses to dissuade Terry from violence.

At the gate they stopped. Catherine looked at him accusingly and said, 'You are the bad of me, you know?'
He did not answer her for a moment, but then he said slowly, 'You must be the good of me, and this time you have won.'
She felt a great strength rising inside her. She looked full into his pale, cruel face and let the strength, and the fire that supported it, envelop him, 'I shall always win,' she said. 'In the end.'
At last he smiled and held out his hand. She stretched out her own and put it into his. (The Watcher in the Garden, p202)

In this novel Phipson does not manage the fantastic elements competently. Incidents such as Kitty and Terry entering each other's mind, seem like a too elaborate dressing on what is (without the fantasy) a convincing story about two unusually sensitive and emotional teenagers who are in the process of learning to control their behaviour. It is, once again, a tale of the tamed rebel with the implication that to rebel, suffer, and be different, is better than being ordinary or insignificant. Mr. Lovett in speaking to Kitty about the differences between her and Diana, her
amiable sister, points out,

'You envy your sister because nature has made her so that she has an easy life. It's natural. But you'll end up achieving more than she will.' (The Watcher in the Garden, p127)

Kitty comes to see this for herself.

Watching Diana so easily assume the role of ministering angel she gave a small sigh. For her it was not going to be as easy, as that, but there was no doubt in her mind, and no regret, either. (The Watcher in the Garden, p203)

Kitty is perhaps the first rebel character to analyse her situation in this way. Her ability to detect and respond to the emotions of other people and the 'moods' of nature is developed eventually into a keen self-awareness. This is an important difference between Kitty and, say, an early rebel heroine like Betty Bruce who is not introspective. Betty does speculate about her situation, but her thoughts are almost entirely occupied with how she can shake off the demands of half a dozen siblings, a childish father and a round of dirty tiresome domestic chores, and in addition, whether it is sinful or unnatural for her to want to do this. Kitty's family is something of a burden to her as well, but they are not at all demanding, rather their comfortable (perhaps smug) lifestyle is representative of the well-ordered society that chokes Kitty. They try to be understanding, and eventually Kitty responds to their protection and acknowledges that they are "the people she love[s]" without, it seems,
relinquishing any of her spirit.

However although this novel seems far removed from early domestic novels and their preoccupation with feeding, cleaning and clothing — *The Watcher in the Garden* dealing more obviously with 'wider' issues of personal growth, one's relationship with the natural environment, and the violence and anger that can be provoked by misunderstanding — the idea that the spirited heroine's energy must be re-directed in some way persists. Ethelred May in *The Daisy Chain* was coaxed from Latin to building her church and caring for her father, Lennie Leighton in *Girls Together* is convinced that caring for her family is a nobler cause than a University education, and similarly Elizabeth in *Flower o' the Pine* sets housekeeping above her academic attainments. Kitty is transformed from a violent and unpredictable girl into an energetic and caring person who saves an old man from death and then attempts to reform his would-be murderer. Apart from the difficulty for the reader in accepting this startling change in the heroine, it is a transformation that was not required from Phipson's heroes. The message to be gained from the portraits of Phipson's sensitive heroes, like Bobby in *The Boundary Riders*, and some of her early heroines like Francis in *Birkin* is "don't judge a book by its cover" — other people have to come to appreciate them. In returning to an older style of
heroine in *The Watcher in the Garden*, more traditional literary patterns re-emerge, and the heroine does have to achieve some reconciliation within her family and modify her behaviour.

Phipson's Kitty and Spence's Rachel are very different characters, heroines of two family stories that are quite unlike each other. Of the two heroines, Rachel is the most unusual to feature in a family story. Rachel is a quiet girl although apparently very self-assured. She does not castigate herself for any supposed lack of courage, ambition or good-looks. She hardly causes her family a moment's worry - she even likes, and is on good terms with her brother. Under a veneer of fantasy and exotic abilities, Kitty is a far more familiar character, the girl who rebels against her family's expectations. Both characters, however, are equally based on the foundation stone of girls' literature, the young girl who questions to some degree the part others expect her to fill. That Phipson and Spence can still approach this issue in innovative and entertaining ways augers well for the continuation of a long tradition of girls' literature, albeit under a different, and less limiting, title.
Standing, with reluctant feet,  
Where the brook and river meet,  
Womanhood and childhood fleet!

Gazing, with a timid glance,  
On the brooklet's swift advance,  
On the river's broad expanse.

Deep and still, that gliding stream  
Beautiful to thee must seem,  
As the river of a dream.

Then why pause with indecision,  
When bright angels in thy vision  
Beckon thee to fields Elysian?

From Longfellow's "Maidenhood".
Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* opens with a challenge to old ways and an optimistic vision of possibilities in a new society. Turner kills off Judy, the chief representative of these hopes, but other Australian writers of family stories have continued to pursue the themes of change and new beginnings for the ninety years history of the Australian children's family story. Writers of these books have almost always been women, and they have usually written about girls - sometimes quite young girls - but more often about those who, as Longfellow has described, as standing at the meeting of "the brook and river". Longfellow's maiden hesitates to take the way of the river - it is the intention of writers of family stories to attempt to answer why she "pause[s] with indecision".

A preoccupation with the heroine's transition from girl to woman, which motivates and typifies the genre, is linked in Australian family stories to issues of cultural identity. A visitor to Australia early in this century, Jessie Ackerman, felt that Australian
girls, "the freest girls in the world",

could for ever abolish some of the demoralising
old-time, old-world usages, and establish new ones
more in keeping with the spirit of freedom and
progress in a country where they enjoy the
advantages of citizenship at twenty-one years of
age...The world's greatest reforms must be brought
about by girls, and Australia is the natural
starting-point.1

This belief informs Australian family stories of the
'Turner era'. In these stories, authors favourably
compare the open and casual nature of Australian family
life to British formality and restriction; extending
this casualness to include the lifestyle of the
heroine. Heroines like Judy Woolcot and Norah Linton
represent what their authors regarded as the positive
cultural, social and physical aspects of Australia, and
symbolise the prospect of "freedom and progress".

However, this Utopian vision is not sustainable in
novels that purport to reflect the reality of family
life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,
particularly as the creators of these heroines are
reluctant openly to oppose accepted standards of
feminine behaviour. Whereas the assumption that a home
and a family is the appropriate future for a woman is
constantly questioned, no acceptable alternatives are
found. Rather, frustration, and even anger, with
aspects of women's lives is covertly expressed in
narratives that apparently uphold conventional
standards.
A perception of the possibility for new and wider opportunities for Australian girls and women, evident in novels of the Turner era, is not entirely dispelled by the 1950's. However, whilst the nature of the 'modern' heroine in contemporary family stories suggests that society welcomed spirit, independence and enterprise in girls; adult women are rarely depicted in anything but a domestic role, and the family structure itself is not questioned as it had been earlier in the century. As a result, the definition of women's lives and activities, seems more unchangeable than it had fifty years earlier. Perhaps in reaction to conservative notions of the family in post-war years, modern authors with special opportunities and encouragement to expand the concerns of the family story, have given the connection between personal change and the inherent possibilities of a new society, greater symbolic force. Aware of the achievements and disappointments of Australian society for girls and women, modern authors of family stories have turned to the natural world for representations of themes that, in essence, are little altered from those that dominated much earlier fiction. They have sought symbols that both acknowledge the inevitability of change for girls, yet indicate the possibility of growth. The distinguished children's author Patricia Wrightson has written one family story featuring a
major girl character, *The Feather Star* (1962). In it the fifteen-year-old heroine Lindy is distressed when a fragile sea-creature, a feather-star, is broken and apparently killed. She later learns that this delicate creature can rebuild itself, and continue living although somewhat altered. Similarly, Karen's wronged convict, Barbara's misshapen horse, Sylvie's min-min, Ryl's blue-crane and Teddy's Longtime are all representations of change and renewal - a positive interpretation of change that characterises the modern family story.

However, it is only in a recent novel, Eleanor Spence's *The Seventh Pebble*, that the burden of change has been lifted from the heroine, and the roots of repression identified in Australian society. Yet, this novel does not have a contemporary setting, and young readers have to turn to novels not at first intended for children, such as *Puberty Blues* 2, for challenging explorations of the situation of girls in contemporary Australian society. In general, modern authors of family stories have avoided any direct confrontation with the standards and expectations of society that cause a heroine to be apprehensive about her future in the first place. Once again, the pattern of compromise re-emerges, and heroines are 'dressed up with nowhere to go'.
The novels examined in this dissertation reflect a proliferation of ideas about the characteristics of, and prospects for, Australian girls. A recent economic history of Australian women in the first years of the colony cautions historians against confusing "ideological influences on women's role and behaviour, as opposed to the more tangible, material forces". The historian Katrina Alford quotes from another study by W. Goode:

historiographically we are most likely to be able to obtain ideals, e.g., public exhortations to virtue; less likely to locate factual descriptions of real behaviour; and least likely to find out what people really believed.

I contend that a sympathetic examination of Australian family stories does give some indication of how women feel, and have felt, about their position in society. The literary patterns of these novels reveal ideological influences on young girls' behaviour and, at the same time, personal oppositions and alternatives to these influences. In this study I have examined the work of eight Australian writers for children who, when writing about girls, are drawn to looking towards their heroine's prospects as women. This inevitably involves the writer in an exploration of very personal concerns and sometimes difficult confrontations with approved standards of belief about women and society. The roots of the family story are firmly embedded in issues of personal and cultural significance for Australians. However, despite the difficulties of writing about such
issues in books for children, the theme of change and new beginnings is compelling. Based as it is on a search for "fields Elysian", the family story in Australia is ensured a long history.
NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, page numbers for children's books refer to the first editions. The letters 'ML' refer to the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, and 'LT' to the La Trobe Manuscript Library, State Library of Victoria. The abbreviation 'Lu Rees Archives' refers to the Lu Rees Archives Collection, Canberra College of Advanced Education Library, Canberra.

Introduction

5. Women, men, girls and boys all read Ethel Turner, however, she was meant to be writing for young girls and, although Turner often wished otherwise, she was aware that girls were her principal audience. In addition, her publishers, Ward, Lock, ensured her books were 'suitable' for this audience. Turner's readership and the confusion of the Bulletin reviewers is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Chapter One

Looking Back

1. Although every attempt has been made to refer to first editions of texts, the valuable first editions of The Daisy Chain and Little Women are difficult to obtain. Quotations are taken from the 1980 Penguin (Puffin) reprint of Little Women and the 1911 Macmillan edition of The Daisy Chain.
20. The question of critical approaches to children's, especially girls' fiction, is discussed further in my article, "Literary Merit and Worth: Children's Books and the Critic's Bugbear", in *Orana*, Vol.20, No.4, November, 1984, pp169-173.
27. W.H.G. Kingston, The Diary of Millicent Courtney; or The Experiences of a Young Lady at Home and Abroad, Gall and Inglis, London, nd. [1873], p286.
29. Franc, p22.
30. Franc, p23.
34. Wighton (1963), p47.
41. See note 23 for details of first volume.
43. This discussion of Saxby's History is part of my article, "Tradition and Perspective: the Critical Evaluation of Australian Girls' Books", Reading Time, No.93, October, 1984, pp26-31.
45. Saxby does not use the term 'reality' in any literary sense as with 'realism' or 'naturalism'. The word 'real' is used to describe whatever view of the world Saxby finds acceptable.
47. Wighton, p14.
49. Modleski, p12.
50. Wighton (1963), p49.
51. Ibid.
58. Saxby (1969), pp166-7. It is worth noting in regard to the full text of this quotation that Saxby is evaluating this book in terms of its (lack of) a message, that is it does not "aim to instruct, to preach...". These contradictions occur often when discussing books considered inferior.
64. Alison Alexander, Billabong's Author: the life of Mary Grant Bruce, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1979.
67. Reading Time was first published in 1957 as "New Books for Boys and Girls" while Orana was first published in 1965. The Children's Book Council has also published a number of publications, the most recent being two collections of seminar talks by authors and illustrators - The Imagineers: Writing and Illustrating Children's Books, ed. Belle Alderman and Lauren Harman, Reading Time Publication No.5, Canberra, 1983; and Writing and Illustrating for Children, Seminars 1975-1980, ed. Eleanor Stoddart, Children's Book Council of the A.C.T., 1985.
69. Brenda Niall, Australia Through the Looking-glass: Children's Fiction 1830-1980, Melbourne University Press, 1984. This book came out late in 1984 when most of this thesis was in its first, and for the majority of chapters, second or third draft. Although it was pleasing to find someone else writing on authors like Lilian Turner and Louise Mack there has been some inevitable (and surprising) overlap. However this is very minor, and my research into the more 'obscure' authors can be considered as original despite the publication of Niall's book, quite apart from our very different approach to the novels discussed.
Chapter 2

A New Departure

1. Turner Diaries, 27th January, 1893. "Turner Diaries" refers to Philippa Poole's edited version. The actual diaries (ML.FM4/6539-6541) have been restricted since 1980, and are not available for study until 2010.

2. Albury Banner, 19th October, 1894. The major disagreement amongst reviewers about Seven Little Australians was the success or otherwise of the last chapters - particularly Judy's death. Some found it very moving, others a distinct weakness, "One may regret that the latter part of the book grows serious, involving a rather strained and unreal tragedy, by which the most distinctive of the seven little Australians is removed from the stage." Daily Telegraph (Sydney) 27th October, 1894.

3. William Steele to Ethel Turner, 21st December, 1894. The letter is reproduced in The Diaries of Ethel Turner(1979), p279. The second edition of Seven Little Australians was being printed in England in December, 1894. Turner Diaries, 7th December, 1894. Turner's publishers were Ward, Lock and Bowden, until Mr Bowden left the firm in 1896, and they were thereafter known as Ward, Lock.

4. Turner Diaries, Entry under 'Reminders for 1894' at back of 1893 diary.

5. Turner Diaries, 18th January, 1893.

6. Turner Diaries, 15th May, 1893. Also 26th April, 1893, "The London Chartered Bank has suspended payment. I have a cheque for £3-13.6 on it. The distress in Sydney is getting terrible, 1,000 bank clerks are out of employ with all these banks going. This is the worst time ever known here."

7. Lilian's novel was written even more quickly, "...I may also mention that my sister Lilian outdistanced that record entirely, with a story of 60,000 words, that she wrote in-I am almost afraid to mention the short number of days. I certainly remember that at the end of the ordeal she walked to a well, and dropped her pen solemnly down it." Ethel Turner, "How I Wrote 'Seven Little Australians'" , Life, 15th March, 1904, pp284-286, esp. p286.

8. Turner Diaries, 16th August, 1893.


10. Turner (Seven Little Australians), p10.

11. The year of the Turner family's arrival in Australia may have been late in 1879; see Brenda Niall(1979), p8.

12. Turner Diaries, 5th October, 1889.
15. Turner Diaries, 7th March, 1892.
16. A letter from W.T. Shead, editor of The Review of Reviews indicates that such precocity was not the norm in the 1890's. "You are really so young that if it were not for the fear of wounding your editorial dignity, I should be inclined to address you as "My dear Children...". This was in answer to a request for Review of Reviews to be put on the Parthenon's 'Exchange List'. W.T. Shead to E. and L. Turner, 22nd January, 1891, Turner Papers, ML MSS 667/12/5.
17. Ethel Turner, "How I Wrote 'Seven Little Australians'", pp284-5.
19. "Had a letter from Ward, Lock, I was amazed to get it so soon. They say they have read my MSS and conclude I wish to negotiate for the immediate publication of it...Not at all a hard letter to get from my first publisher and within a week." Turner Diaries, 9th November, 1893.
20. Turner Diaries, 30th November, 1893.
24. Twopeny, pp82-83.
25. Twopeny, p87.
28. Turner (Three Little Maids), p183. It is impossible to say how closely Dolly's imaginative life corresponded with the young Ethel's romancing. Turner warns against taking Three Little Maids too literally in the dedication, "To My Little Daughter"

Here is a chain for you, sweet,
Hold up your soft hands to catch it;
Pansy and white marguerite,
You will think nothing can match it.

But you will say, Are they true?
All of the flowers in the chain, dear?
Did they all grow up with you,
Or some of them just in your brain, dear?

Count true the white marguerite,
Pansies - as false I must own them.
Life, it may well be, my sweet,
Had not so fair to you grown them.

29. Sunday Times (Sydney), 28th October, 1894.
31. Ibid.
32. Herbert Vere Evatt to Ethel Turner, 14th December, 1939, Turner Papers, ML MSS 667/12/195-198.
34. Speech intended to be given to the Fellowship of Australian Writers, 25th June, 1936. A copy was sent by Davison to Turner for her approval. Turner Papers, ML MSS 667/2/191.
36. See Chapter 1 and the comments regarding Geoffrey Dutton's survey.
38. Cantrell, pxx.
40. Nancy Phelan (Louise Mack's niece), expresses a view of the working woman, particularly the woman writer, which she held as a young girl despite her close association with authors like Ethel Turner and her own aunts. "Women writers wore very queer clothes and coiffures, were sternly blue-stocking in pince-nez or soulful with hair in a cloud..." A Kingdom By the Sea, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1969, p89.
44. Turner Diaries, 18th January, 1893 and 20th January, 1893.
50. William Steele to Ethel Turner, 21st December, 1894 (Poole, p279).
52. William Steele to Ethel Turner 20th September, 1895, Turner Papers, ML MSS 667/5/79-82. Perhaps it did not escape Turner, that the book with the dedication was titled "All Men Are Liars"!
53. "As regards the English sales, we of course desire to see them larger but...not having sufficiently grasped in the first place the fact that it was their Australian character that conduced so much to their success in Australia we hoped to command a very big sale in England..." G.E. Lock to Ethel Turner, 9th September, 1904, *Turner Papers*, ML MSS 667/6/119.


### Chapter Three

**Fame and Money**


3. For a listing of Turner's books see Muir's *A Bibliography of Australian Children's Books*; or Niall(1979).


6. "It is quite time that Ethel Turner made up her mind which class she is writing for, grown-ups or children...One wonders if the author realizes how it has in the long run damaged her sales with a more thoughtful type of parent and schoolmistress." *Adelaide Register*, 8th November, 1924.

7. From her letters to publishers, it is evident that although Turner went along with, and would have welcomed, their intention to increase British sales, she saw the American market as a better prospect. However her books never did achieve significant sales in England or America during her lifetime to her great disappointment. "As you know my great concern for years has been for the books to do better in England and America. Every year I have hoped against hope that they would get a start there, - and every year the hope has been disappointed." Ethel Turner to G.E. Lock 9th December, 1909, *Turner Papers*, ML MSS 667/3/pt.1.


11. Bulletin, 20th October, 1894, p9. Critical assessment of Turner's work during the 1890's was further complicated by the uncertainty as to whether Australia could claim to have a literature of its own. Australian writers of poetry, short stories, histories and popular fiction were also equally welcomed by promoters of nationalism like the Bulletin, as evidence of a burgeoning of indigenous literature.


14. Ethel Turner to A.G. Stephens, 2nd June, 1897. Unfortunately the major and most interesting portion of this letter has since gone missing from the manuscript file ML AC22/4.

15. The first few chapters in What Katy Did(1872) are an example of this in American children's literature. In England, Catherine Sinclair's Holiday House(1839) was an early and very rare celebration of childish high-spirits and pranks. For a comparison between Ethel Turner and Edith Nesbit see Niall(1979) pp62-63. Niall suggests Nesbit may have been familiar with Turner's work.


18. G.E. Lock to Ethel Turner, 9th September, 1904, Turner Papers, ML MSS 667/6/119. Mr Lock did not react favourably to Turner's suggestion regarding the proper subject of her novels and this letter is a good example of London's 'iron-fist' policy. However this only prompted Turner to seek another, more amenable publisher!

19. Mother's Little Girl and Jennifer J. were published by Ward,Lock(London) - Flower o' the Pine by Hodder and Stoughton(London).

20. Ward,Lock wanted their juvenile titles to look substantial and value for money. Complaints from Mr Steele to Turner about the length of her novels began in earnest with the publication of Little Mother Meg(1902). This provoked very angry replies from Turner, but Ward,Lock persisted in their complaints. After an exchange of letters in regard to the length of 'Renunciation' Mr Steele appealed to Turner's business sense, "I quite sympathise with your 'Art' - still you want large sales, don't you? and I am afraid the sculptor illustration can hardly be admitted as a comparison." William Steele to Ethel Turner, 12th February, 1904, Turner Papers, ML MSS 667/6/89.


22. Ethel Turner to Dowell O'Reilly, 27th April, 1916, Dowell O'Reilly Papers, ML MSS 231/10/183-186.
Chapter Four

Enter the Australian Schoolgirl

1. This change in the nature of Australian children's books is very clearly illustrated in Saxby's bibliography to the first volume of *A History of Australian Children's Literature*, which although selective, is sufficient to show the remarkable impact of *Seven Little Australians* on the type of books subsequently written for children. Out of 36 books listed up until the publication of *Seven Little Australians*, 19 are adventure stories written by men, 5
adventure and 2 autobiographical books by women and 10 nature/fantasy books. In the years 1894 to 1910, out of 37 books, 7 are adventure books, 12 fantasy/nature books and 16 are family stories by women. Of these 16 books listed, nine are by Ethel Turner (Saxby does not list 10 others published by her during this period), two by Louise Mack and two by Lilian Turner (Lilian actually published five children's books prior to 1910).


5. Louise Mack, *Teens: a Story of Australian School Girls*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1897. E. Morris Miller appears to regard *The World is Round* as one of Mack's books for children, "Louise Mack is the author of fifteen novels, of which five are stories of Australian school-girls. Three of them appeared between 1896 and 1898, and one, *Teens Triumphant*, 1933, was a belated sequel to *Teens*, 1897." Miller(1940), p.482. Mack appears to have written only three books about Australian schoolgirls, the Teens series. However *Children of the Sun*(1904) and *An Australian Girl in London*(1902) could be classed as children's books, mainly on the basis of content. The *World is Round* however is not written for children even although the theme of the aspiring writer is a major subject as in the Teens series.


11. Ibid.

12. "I think perhaps Australia is getting too much represented by stories of bush shanties; and it is becoming almost a byword in England that Australian life consists of what is portrayed in the sketches of a certain school of Australian writers!" Ronald Buchanan, "Ethel Turner At Home", *Red Funnel*, 1st February, 1909, pp.11-14.

"I agree with you about the Bards of the Bush. If only their work would not be spoken of as poetry! Their thick layer of local colouring alone is enough to slay all pretensions to such a name." Louise Mack to John Le Gay Brereton, 25th February, 1896, *John Le Gay Brereton Papers*, ML MSS 281/11/1-4.
16. This could vary from one to three exceptions, however Marcie Muir does not list either An Australian Girl in London, or Children of the Sun, in her Bibliography. See note 5.
20. Turner Diaries, 6th August, 1897.
22. Turner Diaries, 12th April, 1897.
23. Turner Diaries, 14th January, 1898.
24. "Women's Literary Society to welcome Louisa Macdonald...Such a bit of electricity, Louie's book The World is Round was reviewed in this morning's Telegraph - it said she had not done herself justice, and that it was far too personal, that there had only been one Women's Literary Secretary in Sydney, who was also the daughter of a Supreme Court Judge. It really was cruel of Louie, she devoted two or three scathing pages to poor Margie Windeyer - held her nose and eyes and mouth and brain up to public ridicule and ridiculed the time at the Literary that Margie stood up and recited 'Twas Roses Roses All the Way' and then forgot the next line. And tonight up bounded Margie on the platform quite quivering with wounded pride and bravado and recited 'Roses Roses All the Way' prefaces it with remarks. My hair fairly stood on end. Everyone was talking of it and blaming Louie." Turner Diaries, 20th June, 1896. Unlike the Telegraph, the Bulletin quoted the "scathing pages" at length and with some relish, commenting "O dove-cots of Corio! Let the Austral Salon shiver to think what might have happened if Louise Mack's lot had fallen in Melbourne!" Bulletin, "Literary Notes", 27th June, 1896.
26. Louie and Creed appear to have had a stormy relationship from the start. "Mr Creed came up for the day, he and Louie went out for a walk and came in half an hour late for dinner. They have quarrelled or something. Ditto in afternoon and he caught the bus down instead of walking." Turner Diaries, 26th March, 1893. Also, "Louie says she and Mr Creed have broken it off for ever. That means a fortnight I suppose." Turner Diaries, 27th March, 1893.

28. Miller, p484.
29. Phelan, p162.
31. Turner Diaries, 12th April, 1897.
33. J.S. Bratton The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction, Croom Helm, London, 1981. Bratton comments in regard to A World of Girls, "This was an enormously successful book and set up a new pattern of school stories, and also of heroines who are wild and wilful and do dreadful things because they need love...", p205.
34. I refer to all the girls' books I have read, up to and including contemporary books.
35. Gillian Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories, 1780-1900, Hodder and Stoughton, Great Britain, 1965. Avery notes of Charlotte Yonge's heroines, "They had finished with the schoolroom, they were eager and ardent. What was there for them to do?...They must first of all devote themselves to their families...", pp108-109.
36. "We knew it had all happened, that our Aunt Amy (Brenda) had walked through town dripping wet with her shoes in her hand after being capsized; that Louise had eaten the Headmistress's lunch and run a school magazine in competition with Ethel Turner." Phelan, p130.
37. Ibid.
38. Louise Mack, Teens Triumphant, P.R. Stephensen, Sydney, 1933. This book, along with H. H. Richardson's The Bath, were the first novels published by 'Inky' Stephensen's new company, P.R. Stephensen and Co. that was intended to revolutionise Australian publishing. See Craig Munro, Wild Man of Letters, Melbourne University Press, 1984, p136.
40. There is the suggestion in an early article about Mack that she, too, missed out on going to University. However, whether this was because she failed her matriculation examinations, or was prevented by her family, or simply didn't have the necessary finances, is not known. The way in which the article suggests that it was fortunate for Mack's career she did not go to University makes a fascinating (and telling) comparison with the comments of Lennie's mother and Peter Way that Lennie's disappointment was, in retrospect, best for the welfare of the family. "It is doubtful if [Mack] would have retained [her] fresh literary style if she had followed the career planned out for her - that of a University student, with the culminating degree and cap and gown of a graduate. Although at the time her unhappy failure to put brains into the dismal yoke of examination papers was a bitter disappointment to all concerned it was the best thing that ever happened to her, and opened out the career to which she had always looked forward, although with little hope of success." "Louise Mack", Australian Boys and Girls, p45.

41. Mack (Teens Triumphant), p263.
42. Teens has not been reprinted since the Cornstalk Publishing Co. edition of 1927; Girls Together was last printed by Cornstalk in 1929, and Teens Triumphant has never been re-printed.

Chapter Five

"You're Only A Girl"

1. Turner Diaries, 19th October, 1895.
3. Ibid.
5. Turner Diaries, 19th October, 1895.
6. For one example from many, a royalty cheque for Lilian was sent care of Ethel Turner because William Steele "was not sure of her address". William Steele to Ethel Turner, 16th October, 1906, Turner Papers, ML MSS667/6/193.
7. Ronald Buchanan, "Ethel Turner At Home".
9. It is unlikely these titles are of actual books. The Eldest of Seven is undoubtedly a spoof on Charlotte Yonge's The Daisy Chain.

11. It is interesting to note however that contemporary reviewers did overlook the major themes of *My Brilliant Career* and dismissed the significant issues as "girlishly emotional parts of the book". (Comment by Henry Lawson in his preface to the novel). The comment by The Christian World about Betty the Scribe and Little Women could also be regarded as a case of misinterpretation of the authors' intentions.


14. "It was 'the day after the events narrated in the last chapter,' as the story books say, and Theo was looking white and worried"..."And the four hours of loneliness and responsibility, with self-recrimination and toothache thrown in, had 'laid her proud spirit in the dust,' again as story-books sometimes say."..."She looked at her hands critically: In the book, the beautiful heroine had white blue-veined hands, which had grown more and more transparent, weaker and weaker, until at last the 'light weight of her knitting-needles was too heavy for the frail fair hands!'" *Paradise and the Perrys*, pp110-112.


Chapter Six

"They've none of 'em grown-up!"

4. When complaining of the inadequate length of Captain Cub, Mr Steele states, "Compare in this respect with 'Possum', and you will see how you appear at a disadvantage, and frankly, let me tell you, Mrs Bruce's newer books are selling better than your own." William Steele to Ethel Turner, 26th September, 1917, *Turner Papers*, ML MSS667/7/265.
5. Derek McCulloch (Uncle Mac of the BBC Children's Hour) to Mary Grant Bruce, 18th March, 1935, Bruce Papers, LT MS9975/1309/8(xxi).

6. Madeline Buck, "Mary Grant Bruce", p8. A stronger statement is made regarding her writing in a letter to the author Mary Fullerton who had urged Bruce to pursue writing for adults, "I won't forget your advice about writing for grown-ups. It's hard to get out of a rut - but I've often wanted to do it...". Fullerton passed this letter on to Miles Franklin and it is preserved in the Franklin Papers, ML MSS364/1/16/565.

7. Bruce was paid sixty pounds for one story "Port after Stormie Seas", Blackwoods to Mary Grant Bruce, 25th April, 1938, Bruce Papers, LT MS9975/1309/9.

8. Bruce was not included on Ward, Lock's letterhead list of authors until 1915.


18. Mary Grant Bruce, "How I Became a Writer". This story is repeated in the Woman's Mirror, 2nd September, 1930, p11.

19. "How I Became a Writer".

20. Ibid.

21. Mary Grant Bruce, "Bush Babies", Daily Mail(London), 28th July, 1913. (A clipping of this article is included in the LT Bruce Papers)


23. Mary Grant Bruce, "Her Just Necessitites", Age, 14th September, 1912, p21.


25. On the back of the typed manuscript of a short story "An Australian Christmas" (a story celebrating the 'joys' of summertime heat and bush-fires) is the address, "Mary Grant Bruce, Lyceum Club, 178 Piccadilly, W." Bruce Papers, LT MS9975/1311/1(f).

Chapter Seven

Chips of Old Pots

2. Ethel Turner's royalties declined quite dramatically after a 'bumper' year in 1923. In a handwritten draft of a letter to Mr. Lock she lists her returns to 1927:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>£961</td>
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<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>892</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>1158</td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Ethel Turner to Mr. Lock (London office) n.d. (1928?) Turner Papers, ML MSS667/8/133. During these years Bruce's sales were much better, Billabong Adventures(1927) the novel in which Norah marries, having "an exceptional sale" according to Mr. Bligh. In 1923 Bruce received a royalty cheque for £501.12.3, which Ward, Lock noted was a record. Although of course much lower than Turner's returns for the same year, Bruce's returns increased after this while Turner's declined. C.S. Bligh to Mary Grant Bruce, 3rd May, 1923, Bruce Papers, LT MS9975/1309/8/(x). Mr. Bligh made some interesting observations regarding the decline in sales of family stories, "Mrs Thompson [Lilian Turner] also lately wrote stating how disappointed she was in the sales of her books. For a few years the series were the backbone of our Australian business, and we are keenly disappointed to see the sales declining. We are afraid books are like everything else; the public are always wanting a change. We think some of the chief reasons are the advent of wireless, pictures, the publishing of Bumper Books (which no booksellers like), and the change in the class of book young girls are at present reading." Mr. Bligh to Ethel Turner, 22nd July, 1927, Turner Papers, ML MSS667/8/127-129.

4. "The shortage of imported books caused a spate of publishing for children in Australia. The Annual Catalogue of Australian Publications issued by the National Library of Australia lists only eleven children's books in 1939 but 136 in 1946. However, many of these were cheap editions of non-Australian stories such as Little Women, and in most cases, whether they were original Australian books or not, they were poorly produced and bound, and tended to disappear as soon as they had served their purpose. Saxby (1969), p119.
8. Pixie O'Harris, The Fortunes of Poppy Treloar, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1941.
9. Saxby, (1969), pp166-7 and (1971), pp93-94. Walter McVitty describes Poppy as "one of the most melodramatic novels ever written...". Walter McVitty, "Pixie O'Harris - Writer and Illustrator", Reading Time, No.58, January, 1976, pp4-8. This sort of comment is ridiculously excessive, and McVitty was probably influenced in his views by Saxby's comments.
10. Saxby (1971), p95. Although no Children's Book of the Year Award was given in 1947, Pioneer Shack was nominated as the best teenage novel amongst those submitted for judging. "Australian Awards 1946-76", Reading Time, No.60, July, 1976, pp22-23.
16. Note the results of Geoffrey Dutton's survey of Australian authors' reading in Snow on the Saltbush, referred to in my Chapter 1.
Maurice Saxby also discusses both movements in his History volumes I (1969) and II (1971).
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
30. Firth, p147.
31. D. Swan, Department of Education to K. White, 18th April, 1985.
33. Ibid.
34. L. Norman to K. White, 18th August, 1984.
35. The Victorian and Queensland School Papers also published short stories for children. With both these magazines their acceptance of unsolicited manuscripts in the 1950's appears to have been low. Their role in Australian children's literature however has been (and continues to be) important, and a study of all Australian school papers still needs to be done. Hesba Brinsmead has commented that her "very first MSS to be published was taken by the Victorian School Paper - The Honey Forest". "Profile of an Author", Reading Time, No.39, March, 1971, pp37-8.
Chapter Eight

Laurel trees and Ugly Ducklings

4. Ethel Turner (*Seven Little Australians*), p37.
6. Spence often stated her interest in writing about families and how much she enjoyed reading family stories as a child. "From as far back as I can remember, I was fascinated by families - reading about them, writing about them, observing them. I loved books with family trees, and spent happy hours drawing up our own, with much help from my parents, who both came from large families. When I played with dolls, there had to be at least half a dozen of them, in family order. I invented whole families to take part in complicated games that could go on for days until my friends lost interest." Eleanor Spence in *The Early Dreaming; Australian Children's Authors on Childhood*, Michael Dugan (comp.), The Jacaranda Press, Qld, 1980, pp100-101.
10. Another author to use this type of heroine was Patricia Wrightson in *The Feather Star*, Hutchinson, London, 1962. Her heroine Lindy is a rather quiet girl, uncertain about the future and her own abilities. Lindy finds in the life-cycle of a fragile sea-creature answers to her own concerns about change and experience. Also novels by Margaret Faice, for example, *The Bensons*, Collins, London, 1968.
11. Walter McVitty, "The Novels of Eleanor Spence", Reading Time, July 1977, pp8-20. This essay was modified for McVitty's collection of essays, Innocence and Experience (1981) and the reference to Patterson's Track as a cliche was dropped. Instead he comments, "...Spence's first children's book...was well and truly within the established tradition of its day", p69. I argue that Spence was one of the main writers to establish the tradition he is talking about, especially in regard to the nature of the heroine who strives to improve, or prove, herself.

12. This novel had its beginnings in an unpublished short story written for adults called "Sylvie". Two years after writing this Clark started to write The Min-Min, stopping after the first three chapters to write a biography of Pastor Doug Nicholls, then took-up the novel again and wrote the first draft "very quickly". Mavis Thorpe Clark, "On Accepting the Australian Children's Book Council of the Year Award", Reading Time, July, 1967, pp3-4.

15. OUP Publicity Leaflet, Spence Papers, Lu Rees Archives Collection, B2.
17. See Chapter 10.
   The Family Conspiracy, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962.
   Threat to the Barkers, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1963.

21. Eleanor Spence, "Realism in children's fiction; a writer's view", Children's Book Council Seminar, Writing and Illustrating for Children, Canberra, 30th September, 1984. (Personal transcript) Also, "The Atypical Child: A Writer's View", "[A] comment is that 'there are only three basic plots'. I'm rather surprised at that statement: as a writer who has everlasting struggles with the creation of plots, I wonder whatever happened to the other two!", p193.
22. "Add to Little Men and The Ungardeners books like Anne of Green Gables and Rainbow Valley, and you may begin to get a glimpse of my preference - then as now - for the family story." Eleanor Spence, "Books I Remember", The Educational Magazine, Education Department of Victoria, Vol 37, No. 1, 1980, pp4-6, esp. p6.
23. Joan Phipson has so far written twenty-four novels for children and twice has won the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award (1954 and 1963).
24. Correspondence is being collected by the Lu Rees Archives. At present only correspondence between Lu Rees and Phipson, Spence and Clark is on their files.

Chapter Nine

Seeking and Finding?

1. Hesba Brinsmead, "Why I Write for Teenagers or Something to Give", in Writing and Illustrating For Children, 1985, pp87-95, esp. p90.
5. Spence (Switherby Pilgrims), pp72-3.
7. Spence (Lillipilly Hill), pp175-6.
10. Spence (Jamberoo Road), p37.
14. In making these comments I am not suggesting that Cassie, Harriet and Henrietta are not attractive characters. I have no evidence that child readers prefer these rebel characters to the quieter heroine of most modern novels, but it certainly appears that of all Spence's heroines, Cassie and Harriet are most admired by adults. See for example, Eve Pownall, "Happy Families - With Extras", Reading Time, No.38, December, 1970, pp34-37, esp. p35, and Ruth Grgurich, "Eleanor Spence: a critical appreciation", Orana, Vol.18, No.1, February, 1982, pp31-36, esp. p33. As

15. The prolific English writer for girls, L.T. Meade often used Irish heroines for her rebel characters. Annie Forest in A World of Girls (1886) is not Irish but feels some kinship with the gypsies she impersonates.


21. Both Clark and Spence have stated many times the importance of research and attention to detail in their novels. Critics have commented that Clark in particular, has at times stressed factual detail to the detriment of her writing (McVitty 1981, pp 8-29). Also for Clark's own emphasis on research, see for example, Clark, "Background to a Book" on Writing and Illustrating For Children (1985), pp 71-79, esp. pp 73 and 76. Spence is far more subtle in her use of factual detail; rather she has often stated that her inability to write convincing fantasy keeps her firmly within the bounds of 'reality'. See Spence, "A Special Sort of Dreaming", Dugan (1980), pp 91-101, esp. pp 98-9, and Spence, "The Atypical Child", pp 195-196.


27. Brinsmead, "Why I Write for Teenagers", p94.

Chapter Ten

Links With the Past and New Directions

10. Note for example; the friendship between Marcie and Karen in Patterson's Track, the insults directed at Karen by her brother, and the support for Barbara from her mother and Will in Good Luck to the Rider.
15. For two examples (amongst many) of Spence's comments on her major preoccupation see, McVitty (1981), pp94-96, and Spence "Books I Remember".
18. Spence, "Realism in Children's Fiction: a writer's view".
21. I say "adults" advisably. Unlike earlier writers such as Ethel Turner and Mary Grant Bruce who had to be popular with children to achieve good and continuing sales, modern writers can ensure good sales by winning the Book Award (judged by adults) and therefore need not be particularly popular with children. Walter McVitty amongst many others, has commented on this aspect of modern children's writing, see McVitty, "Giving What is Good for Them", The Age, 9th August, 1977.

23. Phipson, "From Good Luck to the Rider to The Cats", p116.

Conclusion

1. Ackerman(1913), p208.
4. Ibid.
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